Asuka Kimura

The Representation of Widows and Widowhood in English Drama, 1576-1642

Submitted for the award of PhD in English Language and Literature

UCL

September 2016
I, Asuka Kimura, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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11 December 2016
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Abstract

This study examines the representation of widows and widowhood in plays written or performed between the opening and closure of the London commercial theatres. My purpose is two-fold. First, I consider how widows might have appeared on the early modern stage by discussing the material conditions of theatre of the period, including costume, props, gestures, actors, the audience, and theatre structure. Second, I highlight both similarities and differences between the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline representation of widows by discussing plays in each period in relation to their social, political, religious, and theatrical contexts.

Chapter One examines the physical appearance of real-life and stage widows by discussing their costume, accessories, and other attributes. Chapter Two considers the development of two basic types of the lamenting and lusty widow in Elizabethan plays by focusing on widows’ gestures. Chapter Three highlights the transition from the late Elizabethan to early Jacobean periods by examining the representation of the husband’s ghost. Chapter Four considers three plays performed by the King’s Men in the mid-1610s in relation to the adolescent body of the boy actor, uses of the stage balcony, and metatheatrical references to the ‘lusty widow’ trope respectively. Lastly, Chapter Five explores the detailed descriptions of widows’ households and Henrietta Maria’s cultural influence on the representation of ungovernable widows on the Caroline stage.

This study not only reasserts the complexity of widow characters, but also tries to demonstrate how a focus on widows can deepen our understanding of early modern theatre in general. By reconstructing how playwrights and acting companies might have represented widows’ ambiguous position in early modern patriarchal society on the contemporary stage, I aim to make a distinctive contribution to current critical interest in the material conditions of early modern theatre as well as feminist studies of early modern drama.
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Acknowledgements

My profoundest thanks go to my primary supervisor, Professor Helen Hackett, whose patience, continuous encouragement, immense knowledge, and above all, warm-heartedness supported my research and life in London throughout my Ph.D. My research interest was rather vague at the beginning, and she helped me shape it into the current form by asking insightful questions and offering me new perspectives. Without her guidance, I could not have reached this stage. My gratitude is beyond words. My sincere thanks also goes to Professor Alison Shell, my secondary supervisor, whose deep understanding of early modern culture and religion I am much indebted to. Her professional, incisive comments always encouraged me to think more deeply and use early modern sources more carefully. I am grateful to her patience and kindness, taking some time to supervise my dissertation despite her tight schedule. I also would like to thank Karen Hearn, Maria Kanellou, Christine Gottlieb, Anouska Lester, Sam Plumb, and Emma Whipday among others for sharing their precious knowledge and experiences, which helped me deepen my discussion in various ways.
List of Illustrations

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Fig. 34. Title page of Henry Peacham, *Coach and Sedan* (163[6]). © The British Library Board, 012314.ee.88 (title page).
Original spellings have been retained, but I have used brackets to expand contractions, and have modernized u/v and i/j. Unless otherwise stated, all italics within quotations are original.

Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from William Shakespeare’s works are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, 3rd edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), printed edition. Quotations are followed by act, scene, and line numbers in parentheses.


All quotations from Richard Brome’s works are from the ‘Modern Texts’ in *Richard Brome Online*, gen. ed. Richard Cave <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/>, ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4. All quotations are followed by act, scene, and speech numbers in parentheses. For plays without modern editions, I quote from original texts and give page or folio numbers in parentheses.

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 editors’.
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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*, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012-15) up to 1616. For plays composed or first performed after 1616, the conjectural 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 edn (London: Routledge, 1989) when there is no modern edition, or modern editions predate the *Annals*, or modern editions do not discuss the conjectural dates of the first performance. For non-dramatic works, all dates 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 January 1, not March 25, although I retain ‘old style’ when it is desirable in order to avoid confusion. For instance, January 1594 in the old calendar is written ‘January 1594/95’.

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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* (1612-14). This new indoor playhouse on Bankside is ‘a scrupulously researched recreation of a Jacobean theatre of the kind in which Shakespeare’s company performed at the Blackfriars’, as one reviewer says, and enables a modern audience to enjoy the ambience of early modern indoor productions. With 340 people sitting ‘tightly packed’ in the pit and two galleried tiers, the theatre is ‘small, intimate, welcoming’, as another reviewer says, or perhaps slightly uncomfortable, with yourself squeezed between strangers. The stage is dimly lit by seven chandeliers of candles, and turns completely dark when they are put out. There was at first a smell of fresh oak which pleased the nostrils, but would be soon lost after the playhouse had been in use for a while. The sound of archaic instruments, including the lute and viol, conveys 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. This image was stressed by Arterton’s charming smile and high-pitched voice. Antonio was also dressed in a 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). He left a wooden desk and chair; blank papers and a pen remained

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on the desk. 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 candle light, 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 aristocratic 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 The
Duchess of Malfi in order to demonstrate how our perception of a widow
character is influenced by numerous non-textual factors. The age and physical
features of the actress, her costume and facial expression, her uses of props
and gestures, the tone of her voice, her relationship with the actor of Antonio,
as well as more general features such as theatrical structure and capacity,
lighting and sound effects, or even smell all affected the audience’s
perception of Arterton’s Duchess and her remarriage to Antonio. This
recognition is an important one, because it helps us understand the early
modern theatrical representation of widows more accurately by directing our
attention to the material conditions of early modern theatre as well as play-
texts. Although the Sam Wanamaker production did not aim to reproduce the
‘original’ Jacobean production four hundred years ago, its adherence to and
departure from Jacobean theatrical conventions encourage us to imagine how
this widow might have appeared on the stage in the original production. For
instance, one of the significant differences between the Sam Wanamaker and
Jacobean productions of Malfi is that the former uses actresses, while female
roles were invariably played by boy actors in early modern commercial
theatres. 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 in
preference for 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
notably young.\(^4\) On the other hand, the historical Duchess of Amalfi was twenty-seven or 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 between mid-teens to early twenties.\(^5\) 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 indicate, critical interest in the material conditions of early modern theatre is now extensive. Although, as David Bevington explains, some critics had already discussed dramatic roles or symbolic meanings of props and gestures in the 1950s, it was the excavation of the Rose Theatre in 1989 and the subsequent opening of the Globe Theatre in 1997 which made it almost requisite for critics to imagine early modern plays in a contemporary theatrical milieu.\(^6\) 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.\(^7\)

This study examines the representation of widows in plays written or performed between 1576 and 1642, from the opening to the closure of the London commercial theatres. There are two purposes to my study. First, I will explore how widows might have appeared on the early modern stage by discussing the material conditions of theatre of the period, including costume, props, gestures, actors, the audience, and theatre structure, along with playtexts. Second, I will highlight both similarities and differences between the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline representation of widows by discussing plays in each period in relation to their social, political, religious, and

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\(^5\) See Chapter Four below.


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theatrical contexts. Before pursuing these investigations in detail, however, it is useful to take an overview of existing historical and literary studies to explain the socio-historical and critical background of my study.

1. 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 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.8

This interest in the figure of the widow has long been explained from literary tradition and male anxiety toward 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.9 More importantly, however, it was widows’ unique and ambiguous position in early modern patriarchal society which interested many playwrights. Widows were entitled to ‘acquire and dispose of property, contract debts, make wills, [and] engage independently in a craft or trade’ by common law, and this enabled them to enjoy social and economic freedom which was forbidden to other women in the early modern period.10 Although this social and economic freedom was originally given to widows to support their independence and minimize the cost to their communities and kinsmen,

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their autonomy was simultaneously a threat to patriarchal authority and often restricted in practice. Although we should refrain from idealizing early modern widowhood as an occasion for female liberty and independence, considering that many widows encountered financial difficulties and preferred remarriage over celibacy, widows were nonetheless figured as powerful women whose autonomy disturbed gender hierarchy in the popular imagination.  

Widows’ remarriage was as problematic as their autonomy. In early modern England, remarriage was a common phenomenon. Although 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 most widow plays were performed, Vivien Brodsky shows that thirty-five percent of all women marrying by licence between 1598 and 1619 were widows, and Jeremy Boulton finds an even higher remarriage rate for poorer widows in Stepney, East London.

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Although it is tempting to associate these high rates with the Protestant celebration of fruitful marriage and 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.\textsuperscript{15} Instead, these high rates indicate that widows’ remarriage was widely accepted as ‘a necessary survival strategy’ in both medieval and early modern England.\textsuperscript{16} Nonetheless, early modern attitudes toward 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.\textsuperscript{17} Widows were not only entitled to one-third of their husband’s property by common law, but also appointed as guardians of their children’s inheritance.\textsuperscript{18} When widows remarried, however, everything came under the possession of their new husbands, and there was no guarantee that these men would protect the children’s inheritance. By making their own choices of remarriage and a new husband, widows could either secure or disrupt the patrilineal succession.\textsuperscript{19} 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

\textsuperscript{18} On widows’ inheritance, see Maria L. Cioni, \textit{Women and Law in Elizabethan England with Particular Reference to the Court of Chancery} (New York: Garland, 1985), ch. 5; Anne Morris and Susan Nott, \textit{All My Worldly Goods: A Feminist Perspective on the Legal Regulation of Wealth} (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995), pp. 22-29.
\textsuperscript{19} Todd, p. 74.
men to catch a widow by using their sexual potency. Widows’ sensuality was not only proverbial, but also supported 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. 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’. On the other hand, the fact that widows had marital and sexual experience often made them ‘formidably assertive marriage partners’ for their new husbands. While some widows frustrated their new husbands by refusing to transfer some of their property, some undermined their husbands’ masculinity more literally by denouncing their lack of sexual virility in comparison to their former husbands. Although some critics have regarded remarriage as a means to re-confine widows under the control of male authority, remarrying widows were as problematic as autonomous widows in early modern patriarchal society.

### 2. Stage Widows in Recent Scholarship

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23 Foyster, pp. 114-23; Rappaport, pp. 40-41.

The representation of widows in early modern drama has long been discussed in relation to widows’ problematic status in the society of the time. While Charles Carlton has dismissed the early modern representation of widows as invariably negative, Lisa Jardine and Linda Woodbridge have offered more nuanced readings of early modern plays. Whereas Jardine reveals how sexual slanders against the remarrying widow in *The Duchess of Malfi* reflect 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. 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. While Jacobs, Clark, and Hanson understand the theatrical figure of the widow as an allegorical character, who embodies a male fantasy of instant wealth and social advancement, Panek highlights the complexity of widow characters by

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describing them as ambivalent objects of male desire and anxiety. Panek’s study is particularly valuable, using many historical and demographic studies published after the late 1980s and offering 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 remains as the most comprehensive study of the representation of widows in early modern drama to date.28 There are also several unpublished dissertations related to my subject. While Katherine Harriett James and Christine Sutherland focus exclusively on Jacobean plays, Linda Diane Bensel-Meyers and Roger Alfred MacDonald stretch their attention to early Tudor and Caroline plays respectively.29 Elizabeth Thompson Oakes’s study anticipates the works by Panek and other recent critics by discussing plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries from a socio-historical perspective.30

Although all of these studies are useful in various ways, there are two problems with the existing studies of the early modern theatrical representation of widows. First, they are almost invariably text-based. Apart from a few references, including Woodbridge’s assertion that sympathetic representations of widows might have been related to the increasing number of women in the audience, previous studies do not consider how the material conditions of early modern theatre might have affected images of widows.31 While this is partly because some of these studies pre-date the recent interest in the material conditions of early modern theatre and in performance studies in general, this, I believe, is also because many of these critics were

30 Oakes.
31 Woodbridge, pp. 251-52.
influenced by the new historicist agenda of discourse analysis. I have no intention to undermine 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, and 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. On the other hand, as our own theatrical experience teaches us, knowledge is formulated not only by verbal language but also by other sensory experiences. Considering how ideology emerges through various media – speech, visual images (including body ‘language’), auditory and olfactory effects – at the theatre, 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 theatre in the construction of images of widows.

Another problem of these studies is that they almost exclusively focus on Jacobean plays and do not pay much attention to Elizabethan and Caroline drama. 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, as I will discuss in subsequent chapters, the trope already emerged in the 1580s and appeared frequently in the 1630s and early

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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, as exemplified by Woodbridge’s study, critics probably found the Jacobean representation of widows particularly intriguing, 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, and most importantly, there is a general assumption that the theatrical representation of widows did not change during the early modern period. As already mentioned, there are several critics who have directed their attention beyond the Jacobean period: Bensel-Meyers examines some early Tudor plays to find the antecedents of Jacobean images of widows; Oakes’s and Kehler’s studies of Shakespeare cover the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; Clark and Panek mention a few Caroline plays while mainly discussing Jacobean plays; finally, MacDonald discusses both Jacobean and Caroline representations of widows. Nonetheless, these critics generally refer to non-Jacobean plays more to emphasize the continuity of conventional images of widows than to explore characteristics of each period. This lack of interest in distinction between different periods is most succinctly expressed by MacDonald’s following assertion: ‘Although the plays on which the study is based span a period of nearly forty years, they are generally consistent, both in terms of themes with which they deal, and in their attitudes toward the widow’. While these critics are almost certainly correct in stressing some continuities, it is wrong to assume that widows always appeared on the stage in the same way. Even the most stereotypical image of the lusty widow must have appeared differently, according to social, political, and religious concerns and material conditions of theatre in each period.

3. Using a Materialist Approach
With these issues in mind, I will consider how the material conditions of early modern theatre and the social, political, and theatrical contexts of the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods might have affected the images

33 MacDonald, p. 7.
of widows on the stage. As already mentioned, 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 them all, it is cultural materialism which has furnished me with a theoretical framework for my study. Cultural materialism perceives every cultural phenomenon as a material product of specific social and political contexts, and tries to ‘materialise’ 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 author(s) 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 for their supposed invisibility.  

Thanks to cultural materialism and numerous historical studies influenced by its ideas, it is now clear that the material aspects of early modern theatre were only rendered invisible by text-oriented criticism, and that many of these aspects are actually accessible to modern scholars.

Continuing recent critics’ interest in the material culture of early modern England, or more specifically, the 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 necessarily in its original sense as illustrated by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield in *Political Shakespeare* (1994). While cultural materialism was originally inspired by Marxism and continued 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 the material culture of early modern England, and do not

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necessarily highlight the relationship between literature and authority.\textsuperscript{36} Although I remain conscious of this relationship throughout my study, especially in Chapter Five, where I discuss Henrietta Maria’s influence on the Caroline stage, I am more interested in re-imagining early modern theatrical productions in three-dimensional images and considering the interaction between the audience and the stage than picturing the conflict or negotiation between theatre and authority. In this sense, my most immediate predecessors are those critics who have illuminated aspects of stage practice in the early modern theatre, ranging from Bevington’s \textit{Action Is Eloquence} (1984) to \textit{Moving Shakespeare Indoors} (2014).\textsuperscript{37} While earlier critics tended to focus on stage imagery and discuss dramatic roles or symbolic meanings of props and gestures without considering their historical background, recent critics question the assumption that the early modern audience perceived these objects or body language in the same way as the modern audience, and try to reconstruct their social history and meanings in the early modern period. As already mentioned, this critical interest in early modern material culture has


almost certainly been enhanced by the excavation of the Rose and the reconstruction of the Globe, or more recently, the opening of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. My intention is to follow these studies of the material conditions of early modern theatre, or more broadly, of early modern material culture, by discussing how playwrights might have used costumes, props, theatre structure, and actors to represent widows and their ambiguous position in early modern society on the stage.

I am also interested in the material conditions which surrounded early modern widows in reality, namely clothing, accessories, mourning practices, gestures, or 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. Instead of aiming at the liberation of women as a whole, 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 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’. In Renaissance studies, after The Matter of Difference (1991) edited by Valerie Wayne, many studies inspired by materialist feminism have appeared, making histories of women in different social, economic, and political circumstances available for a wider readership. While some critics have foregrounded the reality of women’s

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labour in sites of economic production and biological reproduction which has never been narrated in male-centred, ‘official’ history, some have considered the material and ideological oppression of women in the early modern household and how women resisted or evaded such oppression. Many of 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. It is notable that these critics do not necessarily claim themselves as 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 their practitioners or critical approach. 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 to understand stage representations of widows accurately. I will also remain conscious about differences in terms of class and race as well as gender when I discuss widows either in reality or on stage.

4. Materializing Stage Widows: Five Steps or Chapters


It is worth stressing that this is the first study of the representation of widows in early modern drama which is comprehensive in covering the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods. I also want to stress that, while emphasizing the importance of considering material aspects of early modern theatres, I am conscious of the effectiveness of a more traditional method of close reading of play-texts. As Leslie Thomson states, the material conditions of an early modern production are often revealed through careful examination of stage directions, speeches, or silences in play-texts, and we can understand early modern plays accurately only by combining these two methods. Unlike most of the previous studies, I organize my study chronologically and do not divide it according to character types of widows. This is not only because the character-type structure tends to reduce different representations of widows into one model, but also because the chronological structure enables me to highlight continuity, development, or reaction over the course of years. While using the conventional periodization based on the reigns of the monarchs, which enables me to build my study upon existing studies more easily, I maintain some fluidity between the periods and highlight transitions, because changes in society or theatre often override such periodization. Although I mainly focus on representative plays of each period written by major playwrights, I also refer to plays by minor playwrights and non-dramatic texts when appropriate.

In Chapter One, I will present a history of widows’ physical appearance and consider what kind of costumes, accessories, or other props might have been used to identify widows visually on the early modern stage. This is intended as an alternative history to existing socio-historical studies, which have revealed much about social lives of widows including the patterns of remarriage, but almost never discussed widows’ physical appearance. By using portraits, woodcuts, and other visual images, I will consider how early modern widows looked in reality and how they might have been represented on the early modern stage.

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In Chapter Two, I will consider the development of two basic types of widows in early modern plays, the lamenting widow and the lusty widow, by examining Elizabethan plays. Originally deriving from the Bible and classical literature respectively, both lamenting and lusty widows are represented as problematic figures by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries. Although these types seem antithetical, they are actually interrelated, because widows’ lamentation was not only associated with emotional excessiveness, but also considered as suspicious and hypocritical. By using many gestures, these playwrights highlight the theatricality of widows’ lamentation and destabilize the boundary between the seemingly oppositional images of the lamenting widow and the lusty widow.

In Chapter Three, I will discuss the transition from the late Elizabethan to early Jacobean periods by focusing on the representation of husbands’ ghosts. In Elizabethan drama, widows are often driven to self-condemnation for their new love or remarriage by encountering the ghost of their deceased husbands. In early Jacobean plays, this figure 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 attack is primarily directed toward jealous husbands who try to control their wives’ sexuality even after their own deaths. I will consider how George Chapman and Thomas Middleton challenge Elizabethan conventions by deploying the characteristics of indoor theatres and children’s companies.

In Chapter Four, I will concentrate on three plays performed by the King’s Men in the mid-1610s, whose sympathetic representation of widows makes a clear contrast with the satirical tone of the early Jacobean plays. First, I will consider Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi in relation to the adolescent body of the boy actor. In early modern England, widows and boy actors were both perceived as liminal figures between two genders. I will discuss how widows’ and boy actors’ liminality would have overlapped in the Jacobean production of Malfi by focusing on one boy actor, who might have performed the Duchess in the original production. Then, I will consider Middleton’s two romance comedies which were possibly inspired by Malfi in relation to his uses of the stage balcony and metatheatrical references to the ‘lusty widow’ trope.
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In Chapter Five, I will examine the representation of widows in Caroline drama, which has mostly been neglected by critics. First, I will focus on the increasing number of detailed descriptions of widows’ households in Caroline plays, and discuss how these descriptions signify widows’ authority as mistresses as well as their social and economic status. Second, I will consider the representation of ungovernable widows in relation to the cultural influence of Henrietta Maria. After discussing how Henrietta Maria’s disruption of gender hierarchy might have increased playwrights’ interests in the figure of the ungovernable widow, I will consider how widows’ autonomy and disobedience to male authority are punished by physical assaults and slanders on the stage.

Although each chapter will feature one or two main aspects of the theatrical representation of widows, my discussion will not necessarily be limited to them. Instead, I will try to address as many aspects as possible to highlight the multifaceted nature of individual plays. Along with theatrical contexts, I will also remain conscious about the social, political, and religious contexts of each period or production. By understanding theatrical representations of widows from diverse perspectives, I want to discover interpretations or meanings which have been overlooked by text-based or character-type analysis. My study aims not only to reassert the complexity of widow characters, but also to demonstrate how our focus on widows can broaden our understanding of early modern theatre in general. As I will stress throughout my study, widows are very interesting figures because of their ambiguous status between feminine submission and masculine assertion, death and life, or chastity and sexual awareness. By reconstructing how early modern playwrights and acting companies might have represented such complex figures on the stage, I aim to make a distinctive contribution to current critical interest in the material conditions of early modern theatre, as well as in the early modern representation of troubling gender issues on stage.
Chapter One

Alternative History: Mourning Garments and Other Attributes of Widows in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England

While numerous historical and demographic studies have recovered many social and economic aspects of the lives of early modern widows, including patterns of remarriage and the means of living, there has been no dedicated study of widows’ physical appearance or material lives in early modern England. Such study is especially meaningful for theatre historians, because it gives us valuable clues for how widows might have looked on the early modern stage. As I will discuss below, there are few historical records of what particular costume or props were used to represent widows in early modern theatre. Although stage directions and speeches are very useful sources for reconstructing the physical appearance of stage widows, they do not necessarily give us a detailed description or vivid picture of each object. It is therefore helpful to look at visual images such as portraits and woodcuts, because they teach us what kind of costume or accessories widows were associated with in reality and in the popular imagination.

In this chapter, I will first present a history of widows’ mourning garments and discuss how widows might have looked or might have been expected to look in reality by examining portraits and woodcuts. Since my intention is to reveal complex meanings associated with these items, I will start my narrative from antiquity, revealing a variety of mourning garments and accessories used by widows over the course of years. I am much indebted to Lou Taylor’s extensive study of the fashion of mourning costume of women in general, and it is often difficult to relate the history of widows’ mourning garments without referring to visual images of mourning women who are not widows.¹ Nonetheless, my focus is specifically on widows’ mourning garments, and I will discuss many portraits and woodcuts of widows which have not been discovered by Taylor or other historians. Then,

I will consider what kind of costume or props might have been used to represent widows on the early modern stage. While using stage directions and speeches as main sources, I will augment these clues with visual images of early modern objects. I will also explore how these objects, whose cultural and symbolic meanings were often complicated, might have made visible on the stage the ambiguous position of widows in early modern society.

1. History of Widows’ Mourning Garments

A. From the Inception to the Fifteenth Century

The inception of widows’ mourning garments goes back to antiquity. In ancient Rome, widows covered their head with the *ricinium*, a piece of cloth made of dark wool, for a year prescribed for mourning. Widows’ mourning garments also appear frequently in the Bible. For instance, ‘Judith was in her house a widowe thre yeres and foure moneths’. She made ‘a tente upon her house, and put on sackecloth on her loynes, and ware her widowes apparel’. According to the *OED*, sackcloth is ‘the material of mourning or penitential garb’, and ‘the coarsest possible clothing, indicative of extreme poverty or humility’.

Although there might have been some indigenous form of mourning costume, it is only after the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England that we can trace the history of widows’ mourning garments with some confidence. Considering the biblical association between widows’ mourning apparel and Christian humility, it is unsurprising that the basic fashion of widows’ mourning garments in England derived from nuns’ costume in the early Christian convents, the earliest of which was established in Rome in the fifth century. Indeed, widows were significant figures in the early Christian church. Not only did they found and maintain many convents, but they also

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3 Judith 8.4-6, quoted from the Geneva Bible. See also Genesis 38.14; II Samuel 14.4-5.
4 ‘sackcloth, n.’, *OED*, 1.b [accessed 3 July 2016].
5 Taylor, pp. 66-69.
fulfilled ecclesiastical duties which uniquely placed them within the male-dominated church hierarchy.\(^6\)

Widows’ mourning garments designed after nuns’ costume were spread across Europe by the Catholic Church. Fulvio Androzzi, an Italian Jesuit, explains how these garments might have reached England in *The Widdowes Glasse* (1621), a religious treatise applauding virtuous widowhood, published with another work by a Jesuit father, Leonardus Lessius’ *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity*. The translator, John Wilson, dedicates these works to Eleanor Brooksby and Anne Vaux, the recusant sisters and priest harbourers, respectively. Brooksby was a widow who never remarried, while Vaux was an unmarried woman.\(^7\) According to Androzzi, there was a custom in pre-Reformation England to give a special garment called a ‘mantle’ and a ring to widows who ‘had for certainte number of yeares, lived in Continency & widdowhood’:

> It seemes that this custome was in use in our Iland long before the Conquest, about 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 whereof, 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’,

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while the ring was ‘Gold, or Silver, made plaine and round, like to a wedding Ring’. Widows knelt ‘before the high altar […] in tyme of solemn Masse’ and received hallowed mantles and rings from bishops until the ritual was abolished by the Reformation. Although these items are somewhat different from mourning garments, as they signify widows’ vowed chastity and devotion to Christianity rather than their state of mourning, Androzzi’s account suggests how the basic style of widows’ mourning garments might have reached England.

Visual images of widows’ mourning garments are available from the late fourteenth century onwards. Taylor has found two valuable images which reveal the physical appearance of widows before the establishment of formal court mourning in the late fifteenth century. 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 (1595-97) (fig. 1). The second image shows a tomb effigy of Philippa de Mohun, duchess of York, whose last husband was slain at Agincourt in 1415 (fig. 2). Apart from small differences, these widows are dressed similarly. First, they put on ‘[a] draped head-covering’ called a coverchief. Second, they wear a barbe, ‘[a] length of vertically pleated linen encircling the chin and falling to the bosom’. Thirdly, they put on a surcoat, ‘a Close bodied gowne or straight bodyed gowne’, as explained in one sixteenth-century manuscript showing sartorial regulations for mourning costume of ladies at court (see below). Finally, they have a mantle over their surcoat, which may be the same mantle as mentioned by Androzzi.

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9 Taylor, pp. 71, 74.
12 London, British Library, Harley MS 1776, fol. 9v.
Fig. 1. Brass from the tomb of Eleanor de Bohun, duchess of Gloucester, 1399. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Used with permission.

Fig. 2. Tomb effigy of Philippa de Mohun, duchess of York, 1431. Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Used with permission.
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 two-fold. First, they established the rules for heraldic funerals and conducted obsequies accordingly. Second, they imposed fines upon people who emulated the type of funeral reserved for higher ranks.13 The conduct of funerals was strictly hierarchical. Not only did the procedure of a funeral change according to the rank of the deceased, but also attendants at a funeral were classified according to social class. It is then unsurprising that the College prescribed rules for mourning apparel for each rank to protect the traditional hierarchy.14 The first provisions that regulated mourning garments of ladies at court were issued by Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and Derby and the formidable mother of Henry VII, around 1493.15 To begin with, there are four basic items. Every woman puts on ‘a surcoot wth a traine before and an other behinde’, and wears ‘a mantle wth a traine’ over the surcoat. Then she covers her head with ‘a plaine hoode’ with a tippet, a pendant tail of a hood, and wears a barbe.16 At the same time, however, the design of each garment, the quality and amount of fabric, and manners of wearing are strictly regulated by social rank. For instance, the queen is allowed to wear ‘the greatest and longest traine because she is the greatest estate’.17 While those above ‘the degree of a Baronesse’ can wear barbes ‘above the chynne’, the rest must wear them ‘under there throates’.18

15 The copies of these provisions appear in two manuscripts, BL Harley MS 1776 and London, British Library, Harley MS 6064, in slightly different forms.
16 BL Harley MS 1776, fol. 8r; Cumming et al., pp. 121-22.
17 BL Harley MS 1776, fol. 8r.
18 BL Harley MS 6064, fol. 27v. This provision appears only in this manuscript.
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As Susan Vincent notes, the general principle was that ‘those of the most elevated ranks had garments of the greatest length’. These provisions were repeatedly re-copied by the College of Arms, and established the basic fashion of widows’ mourning garments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.  

B. From the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries: Royal and Aristocratic Widows

One might think that there was no variety or change in the history of widows’ mourning garments. Deriving its basic form from nuns’ costume, they were intentionally unfashionable from the inception. Indeed, the traditional style of widows’ mourning garments was hardly distinguishable from that of male mourning garments, which had similarly developed ‘from the gowns worn in the sixth century by Benedictine monks’. By denying widows’ femininity and sexuality, mourning garments visually indicated these women’s retirement from secular pleasure and devotion to Christianity. However, although the establishment of the provisions for mourning apparel in the fifteenth century seems to point toward the same conclusion, widows’ mourning garments were very susceptible to changing fashions, and underwent many changes.

As regarding colour, white had a long tradition as a mourning colour in Christian society, for it was a liturgical colour signifying resurrection and rebirth. Although white was still used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was either perceived as a foreign custom or associated with people from religious institutions. Brown was also popular. In the fourteenth century, Chaucer mentions Criseyde’s ‘widewes habit large of

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19 Vincent, p. 63.
20 Taylor, p. 70.
23 See fig. 4 below. In a drawing of Queen Elizabeth’s funeral procession in London, British Library, Additional MS 35324, fol. 31’, children and gentlemen of the Chapel Royal appear in white gowns.
samyt broun’ (I.109). Grey and red might also have been accepted, though no historical record survives. Notwithstanding, the dominant colour used after the sixteenth century was black. Black was already in use in the fourteenth century when Chaucer makes Criseyde reappear in a ‘widewes habit blak’ (I.170). In the late sixteenth century, John Ferne mentions ‘black moorning’ as a respectable item for a funeral in The Blazon of Gentrie (1586). Edmund Bolton also claims that ‘[t]o mourne in black is as nationall [sic] a custome, as for the grave, and civil to go therein’ in The Elements of Armories (1610).

While black became the standard colour, the design of widows’ mourning garments became more diverse after the sixteenth century. Before the sixteenth century, widows were dressed in traditional apparel with barbes and coverchiefs, as can be seen in a posthumous copy of the only known portrait of Margaret Beaufort, the founder of the provisions for female mourning dress in the fifteenth century.

25 Taylor, p. 259.
Nonetheless, Beaufort’s portrait also signifies an important departure from tradition, because her head-dress is not exactly a coverchief, but a gabled head-dress, which was fashionable at the time of her death. It is also significant that Beaufort carries a small book, which is probably the Bible or a prayer book, continuing the traditional association between widows and piety.

Although widows continued to wear barbes and coverchiefs in the first half of the sixteenth century, the fashion of widows’ mourning garments changed radically in the last three decades of the sixteenth century. One of the most important changes was introduced by Mary, Queen of Scots. In a portrait which was 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\textit{ deuil blanc} or white mourning (fig. 4). ‘Deuil’ means bereavement or mourning in French, and was originally spelled ‘dueil’ in the

\textsuperscript{29} Taylor, p. 75.  
\textsuperscript{30} Taylor, p. 79.
fifteenth century. It is notable that Mary wears a new head-dress called a Paris head, which 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 became so popular that it was worn by every woman in mourning except the poorest in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Fig. 4. Mary, Queen of Scots, François Clouet, c. 1520-72, RCIN403429. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2014. Used with permission.

Drawings of funeral processions also reveal a great variety of designs of mourning garments which might have been adopted by widows. A collection of manuscripts now at the British Library contains detailed sketches of funeral processions of six personages, including Mary, Queen of Scots, Lady Jane Lumley, and Queen Elizabeth. In the drawings of Mary’s procession conducted on 1 August 1587, women appear in traditional apparel.

32 Taylor, p. 81; Frye, pp. 45-50.
33 BL Additional MS 35324.
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namely simple gowns and pleated barbes, almost in the same manner as Margaret Beaufort except their long veils reach the waist. According to one contemporary account, one hundred ‘poore old women’ attended Mary’s procession, most of whom were ‘widowes in black cloth gowynes, with an ell of white Holland over their heads’. It was customarie in heraldic funeralls to have the same number of almssmen or almsswomen as the age of the deceased, which was occasionally substituted by one hundred, to show the generosity and benevolence of the deceased. These widows are depicted in one of the drawings (fig. 5). They all wear dresses tied at the waist with small barbes or collars without pleats, and either veils or Paris heads. Many of them carry sticks, probably indicating their old age. Indeed, one of them needs to hold on to another woman to walk. Another sketch shows Bridget Russell, countess of Bedford, in a loose gown with the longest train, which signifies her as a chief-mourner (fig. 6). Her train is carried by Lady St. John of Basing wearing a hood with a tippet.

Fig. 5. Almswomen in the funeral procession of Mary, Queen of Scots, artist and date unknown. © The British Library Board, ADD.35324 f15v. Used with permission.

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). For other examples of a hundred almssmen, see Woodward, pp. 15, 30. See also a hand-written description in a drawing of Lady Lumley’s procession in fig. 7 below: ‘The poore woemen Mourners in this manner to th’ number of fortie two According to th’ age of the deceased’.

35 Cumming et al., pp. 208-09.
The drawings of Lady Jane Lumley’s procession on 19 August 1578 illustrate four styles of mourning garments. First, almswomen appear in the same costume as those in Mary’s procession (fig. 7). Although we cannot tell whether they were also widows, the fact that both groups of almswomen are represented in the same fashion suggests that this was probably the basic style of mourning garments given to poor widows who appeared as almswomen. The second style is shown by Anne Howard, countess of Surrey (fig. 8). Again, the chief-mourner has the longest train, although the countess of Surrey’s costume is much more elaborated than the countess of Bedford’s: first, her black veil has a white hem; second, she wears a narrow white ruff; third, she wears a pleated front covering instead of a barbe; finally, the front of her mantle is elegantly looped up. The third type is worn by ‘Mrs Coote the Queenes Woman’, the countess of Surrey’s train bearer. She 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-bearer. They are dressed almost identically to the chief-mourner, although they have neither a train nor a mantle looped up at the front.
Finally, the drawings of Queen Elizabeth’s procession reveal two important changes. First, the traditional style of mourning garments has been drastically changed by the influence of 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. 9). The upper part of her costume is easily recognizable as Elizabethan with a white ruff and cuffs, decorative stomacher, and padded trunk sleeves. The same can be said about the lower part of her costume. Though hidden by her long veil, Lady Gorges’s skirt is clearly shaped by a farthingale, and has a decorative design running vertically down the centre. It is also unprecedented that the chief-mourner holds a white handkerchief. Her train is so heavy and lengthy that it requires three train-bearers. Second, sartorial distinctions between people of different ranks or different roles in the procession have become less conspicuous. For
instance, a mantle with a train is no longer restricted to a chief-mourner, but also worn by others. Indeed, the chief-mourner is hardly distinguishable from her train-bearers, the only difference being the decoration on her skirt and the white handkerchief. Although the maids of honour and of the privy chamber have neither stomachers nor decorations on their skirts, they can still wear skirts with farthingales, ruffs and cuffs (fig. 10).

While the Elizabethan style of mourning garments survived the first two decades of the seventeenth century, it was gradually taken over by a new fashion, as evinced by a portrait of Anne of Denmark (fig. 11). Based on a portrait painted in her lifetime which is now lost, this posthumous copy represents Anne in mourning for her son, Prince Henry, who died in
November 1612. While her mantle appears voluminous like the Elizabethan style, a flamboyant ruff is replaced by a delicate black lace collar around her neck. Her small head-dress and lace-edged neckline also anticipate the popular style of the next generation.

Fig. 11. *Anne of Denmark*, unknown artist, c. 1628-44, NPG4656. © National Portrait Gallery, London. Used with permission.

By the 1620s, the Elizabethan style was discarded and a new style emerged. Many widows stopped hiding their necks, shoulders, even breasts in a similar manner to Anne of Denmark, and started to wear a dress with a lace-edged neckline. This is a striking departure from the original fashion of mourning garments, whose loose and bulky style concealed the body shape as if to protect widows from men’s erotic gaze. Widows also abandoned arched hoods and often revealed their hair. Like ordinary dress, widows’ mourning garments give a soft, feminine impression in the Jacobean and Caroline periods. It is also significant that it became fashionable for widows
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to sit for a portrait in mourning garments, producing a larger number of portraits of royal and aristocratic widows than in previous decades.\textsuperscript{36}

One example of this new fashion appears in a portrait of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia (fig. 12). Created during her exile in the Netherlands, the portrait was probably commissioned by Elizabeth to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of her widowhood. Although Elizabeth was living on the Continent, her mourning garments and accessories reflect many features of English mourning costume of the Jacobean and Caroline period. Like Anne of Denmark, she wears a very small head-dress which reveals most of her hair. She is also uncovered around her neck, shoulder, and upper breast, wearing a dress with a lace-edged neckline. Her sleeves are tucked up, showing white lining and her white arms. While the mourning costume allows the widow to appear attractive by exposing her hair and skin, other small objects emphasize her loyalty to her husband. Elizabeth wears not only pearl earrings which had been given by her husband, but also a ring on her left hand.\textsuperscript{37} The fact that Elizabeth wears it on her little finger, instead of the fourth finger on which a wedding ring was traditionally worn, suggests that this is probably a mourning ring, the custom ‘already well established in the reign of Charles I’.\textsuperscript{38} A black band on her wrist is also a characteristic of mourning costume in the Caroline period (see also figs. 25 and 28 below). It is also significant that Elizabeth holds two roses, ‘one healthy and one wilted’, in her right hand to signify her widowhood. Similarly, the dog may symbolize the widow’s loyalty to her husband.\textsuperscript{39} The portrait importantly teaches us that widowhood can be signified both by cultural artefacts (mourning ring and wrist band) and allegorical objects (roses and a dog), a useful piece of knowledge for considering the theatrical representation of widows.

\textsuperscript{36} Taylor, pp. 93-95.
\textsuperscript{39} See n. 37 above.
Another popular style of the 1630s appears in a portrait whose sitter’s identity is debated (fig. 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. While adopting new fashions, the lady’s mourning costume preserves 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 at her throat by a small black ribbon. While concealing her shoulders, the lady reveals her white breasts and

40 ‘Called Lady Penelope D’Arcy, later Lady Gage and Lady Hervey (c. 1594-1661)’, National Trust Collections <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/851802> [accessed 15 May 2016]. Lady Penelope Hervey describes herself as a widow of ‘S’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. 126v).
arms from white tucked-up sleeves in the same manner as Elizabeth Stuart. Though unclear from this reproduction, Taylor notes that she also wears pearl earrings and necklace like Elizabeth Stuart.41

![Fig. 13. Called Lady Penelope D’Arcy, later Lady Gage and Lady Hervey (c. 1594-1661), unknown artist, c. 1640-61, NT851802. © National Trust Images. Used with permission.](image)

Lastly, a portrait of Henrietta Maria created after Charles’s execution in 1649 is almost a catalogue of changes in the fashion of mourning garments since the 1620s (fig. 14). First, Henrietta wears a black lace veil which reveals some of her hair. Second, she wears a dress with a lace-edged neckline which cuts down from her shoulders to the upper breast. Thirdly, the exposure of her skin is minimised by a transparent white cloth covering her neck and shoulders. Finally, she wears a pearl necklace. Apart from these items, Henrietta wears three black ribbons which were presumably common items in the Caroline period.42 It is also significant that Henrietta wears two rings

41 Taylor, p. 95.
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. 15). 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.


43 ‘Ring’, *Victoria and Albert Museum* <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126108/ring-unknown/> [accessed 15 May 2016].
Fig. 15. Ring, seventeenth-century painting with eighteenth-century setting, museum number M.1-1909. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Used with permission.

While these images of royal and aristocratic widows are impressive, it is incorrect to assume that widows continued to wear mourning garments almost perpetually. Although it was only in the eighteenth century that ‘the keeping of a period of mourning became more widespread’, widows were often recommended to spend at least one year for mourning in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prescriptive literature, and many royal and aristocratic widows conformed to this social expectation.\textsuperscript{44} On the other hand, it was at widows’ discretion how long they would put on mourning garments. While a few widows continued to wear mourning garments until death to signify their loyalty to their husbands, widows usually discarded them when the official period of mourning was over. For instance, Mary, Queen of Scots, mourned for her first husband for forty days and left France. When she arrived at Scotland in August 1561, she was still wearing the \textit{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’.\textsuperscript{45} After the Scottish Court’s one-year official mourning was over, however, Mary started wearing – or at least collecting – colourful garments. The inventory of her wardrobe dated February 1562 reveals that Mary owned sixty gowns, many of which

\textsuperscript{44} Gittings, p. 119; Oakes, pp. 117-18.
\textsuperscript{45} Qtd. in Helen Smailes and Duncan Thomson, \textit{The Queen’s Image: A Celebration of Mary, Queen of Scots} (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1987), p. 33.
were made of cloth-of-gold. There were also gowns in green, blue, and orange, decorated with silver embroidery. Although the majority of her clothes were still black, this is a remarkable change.\textsuperscript{46} A similar change happened to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia. After the death of her husband in 1632, Elizabeth imprisoned herself in her bedroom 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’, although ‘never in colours’.\textsuperscript{47} These examples indicate that widows could put off mourning garments without blame after the official period of mourning was over, which is completely reasonable considering that many royal and aristocratic widows remarried afterwards. These examples also suggest that widows’ emergence from mourning garments must have been as spectacular as their wearing of them. I will consider this transition from mourning to ordinary costume, from widowhood to a new life, more deeply when I discuss plays.

It should also be noted that the wide range of mourning garments worn by royal and aristocratic widows were by no means accessible for all widows. While widows in high society had to follow strict regulations prescribing dress code for each rank, those in lower society could hardly imagine themselves in such luxury, as will be discussed in the next section. Nonetheless, these images help us visualize how royal and aristocratic widows would have looked in reality in the early modern period.

C. From the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries: Middle and Lower Class Widows

While widows from high society were hindered from imitating the fashion of their social superiors by regulations of the College of Arms, middle and lower class widows were technically exempted from these regulations, whose primary purpose was to protect the social hierarchy of attendants in heraldic funerals from which most non-gentry widows were excluded. Although the College was expected to punish ordinary people for imitating

\footnote{\textsuperscript{46} Taylor, pp. 82-83.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{47} Cunnington and Lucas, pp. 263-64; Taylor, pp. 52-56.}
the funerals of their social superiors, their supervision was far from absolute in reality. As Taylor maintains, wealthy widows of the merchant class must have been able ‘to encroach on noble privilege’ by imitating the fashion of aristocratic widows.

On the other hand, a majority of middle and lower class widows could not afford this because black cloth was an expensive commodity. For instance, the bills for Sir Nicholas Bacon’s funeral in 1578 note that 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.

According to the National Archives’ Currency Converter, one shilling in 1580 had the same purchasing power as £7.47 in 2005. This makes one principal mourner’s mourning garments cost £2689.20, one gentleman’s cost £896.40, and one yeoman’s cost £134.46, in today’s value. According to David Cressy, ‘[p]articipants in common funerals wore their everyday costume’, and this was probably the same for a majority of middle and lower class widows who could not afford black mourning garments. Although there is no historical record, some widows might have dyed ordinary costume 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). The period of wearing mourning costume was also probably much shorter for middle and lower class widows. Mourning was still a privilege of those who could afford ‘money and leisure’, and ordinary people ‘returned in short order to the routine concerns of their lives’. Middle and lower class widows also remarried more quickly than royal and aristocratic widows. According to Brodsky, more than seventy percent of middle class widows remarried within

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48 Litten, pp. 13-14; Taylor, p. 27.
49 Taylor, p. 66.
50 Gittings, p. 181.
52 Cressy, p. 438.
53 Cressy, p. 438.
one year, with almost a half of wealthy widows remarrying within six months, in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London.\textsuperscript{54}

Although there is much less historical evidence when compared to royal and aristocratic widows, there are several portraits and woodcuts which help us reconstruct how middle and lower class widows might have looked or were expected to look in reality. It seems that widows who had either money or 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 one is Joyce Frankland, née Trappes, who was a daughter of a London goldsmith and married twice to London clothworkers (fig. 16). After the deaths 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 which derived from 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 memento of her husband or son. As Tarnya Cooper notes, the timepiece may also signify ‘the transience of human life and perhaps her own circumstance of a lost child and exhausted fertility’. Indeed, the Latin inscription at 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.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54} Brodsky, p. 133.
The portrait of Katheryn of Berain represents the widow’s intermediate status between life and death, marriage and widowhood (fig. 17). The portrait was created in Antwerp to commemorate Katheryn’s marriage to her second husband, Sir Richard 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’.

Although Katheryn’s black dress adorned with cloth-of-gold is 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 a skull. According to Cooper, it was commonplace to have a skull in a portrait commemorating marriage in the sixteenth-century Netherlands. Nonetheless, the skull bears another 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 a new marriage.

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56 Enid Roberts, ‘Katheryn of Berain [Mam Cymru] (c. 1540-1591), ODNB [accessed 3 July 2016].
57 Cooper, pp. 101-05.
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. 18 and 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.⁵⁸ Each of these woodcuts appeared respectively in a broadside and a pamphlet which were published in response to the discovery of Overbury’s murder in 1615. In the first woodcut, Turner is represented in a typical Elizabethan mourning costume with a farthingale, black veil, and white cuffs and ruff. It is notable that Turner holds a handkerchief and a small Bible or prayer book, both of which signify her contrition for the murder. At the same time, however, it is worth recalling that a small religious text was occasionally

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⁵⁸ Alastair Bellany, ‘Turner, Anne (1576-1615)’, *ODNB* [accessed 3 July 2016].
associated with Catholic widows in early modern portraits, because Turner was overtly Catholic. The Bible or a prayer book itself, of course, is not a sign of Catholicism. Indeed, it often signifies widows’ religious and moral virtue in early modern plays, as I will discuss below. Nonetheless, the fact that black costume makes widows almost look like nuns often makes the religious text an ambiguous object in visual representations. 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 representing her contrition sympathetically, these writings seem to stigmatize Turner as a Catholic murderess.

Fig. 18. Anon., Mistris Turners Farewell to All Women ([1615]). By kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

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), ch. 4.
Another image of an ordinary widow in black appears in Cesare Vecellio’s *De gli habitî antichi et moderni di diverse parti del monde* (1590) and its enlarged edition, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il monde* (1598), famous Italian books on costume published all over Europe and ‘almost certainly […] known to Shakespeare’. 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. 20). Her head-dress looks unfamiliar, but is most probably a variation of a tippet, which could be wound like a turban. The cloth which covers her shoulders but exposes her throat also seems to be a variation of a barbe.

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61 Cumming et al., pp. 121-22.
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.62 Here, the widow faces her third sorrow as she witnesses her husband’s burial (fig. 21).

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While the woodcut shows nothing black apart from 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.

Although widows are generally represented in black mourning garments, they occasionally appear in ordinary costumes. As already mentioned, 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. 22).
While the widow in Copland’s work at least keeps her veil, a widow in Samuel Rowland’s *Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete* (1613) appears in completely ordinary apparel (fig. 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. 24).
Fig. 23. Detail from title page of Samuel Rowlands, *Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete* (1613). By kind permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Fig. 24. Detail from title page of Samuel Rowlands, *Well Met Gossip: or, Tis Merry When Gossips Meet* (1656). © The British Library Board, C.117.b.52. Used with permission.
This survey of visual representations of widows has revealed a variety of mourning garments, accessories, and other attributes associated with widows historically, as well as how widows might have looked or were expected to look in reality in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Deriving from nuns’ costume, widows’ mourning garments were originally simple and unfashionable, signifying their Christian humility and religious devotion. Along with the development of the heraldic funeral, however, the cultural and social meanings of mourning garments changed. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they generally signified the social and economic status of the wearer or the deceased rather than piety. The style of widows’ mourning garments also changed dramatically, reflecting particular tastes of fashion in each period. At the same time, however, it was only royal and aristocratic widows who could enjoy the changing fashion of mourning garments and adorn themselves with rich accessories. Apart from a few who had either wealth or connection to the court, middle and lower class widows were generally excluded from such luxury. They might have worn ordinary garments, which could possibly be dyed black, or only a part of the mourning costume. They also discarded mourning garments more quickly than their social superiors, either to resume a daily work life or to remarry.

The survey not only helps us reconstruct how widows might have looked in reality, but also brings out several points which are useful in discussing theatrical representations of widows. First, it is notable that widows are almost invariably dressed in black in these images. The fact that even middle and lower class widows, a majority of whom could not afford it, are associated with black costume suggests that it was probably the most familiar visual icon of widowhood in the early modern period. Second, widows are often associated with various objects in these images, including books, rings, and handkerchiefs, many of which are also staged in early modern plays. While these images help us recognize the significance of these objects, it should be noted that their cultural and symbolic meanings vary according to the context of each representation. Finally, widows’ physical appearance reveals not only the fashion of the period, but also many things about widows themselves. While the *deuil blanc* of Mary, Queen of Scots, emphasizes her French connection, the mourning costume of Elizabeth Stuart may indicate not only her knowledge about the Caroline fashion, but also her
self-perception as an English princess. Whereas Joyce Frankland’s black costume with a ruff and cuffs shows her keenness about the courtly fashion and considerable wealth, the ordinary costume of the widow in Rowlands’ 1613 pamphlet indicates that she has finished mourning and enjoys a new life, drinking wine and chatting with her gossips. These images help us imagine how widows might have looked on the early modern stage, as well as teaching us the importance of examining costumes and props to understand stage widows more accurately.

2. Widows’ Costumes and Other Attributes on the Early Modern Stage

Now the question is what kind of costumes and props might have been used to represent widows on the early modern stage. As already mentioned, historical evidence of these objects is scarce. The only widow character whose visual image survives is Tamora in Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus (1584–94). The drawing in the Longleat manuscript, which is now widely accepted as a representation of a scene from the play and attributed to Henry Peacham, 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’. While this is a valuable record of the physical appearance of a widow character, it is questionable to what extent Tamora’s costume and crown can be taken as representative of the theatrical representation of widows on the early modern stage. Nor are widows’ physical appearances mentioned in Simon Forman’s accounts of the early modern productions of four Shakespearean plays, two of which included widows. Philip Henslowe’s diary and inventory of costumes and props owned by the Admiral’s Men do not mention widows’ costumes per se, although there are two interesting records. On 4 February 1602/03, Henslowe paid a tailor for ‘vellvet & satten for the womon g owne of black vellvet w th the other lynenges belonginge to yt’, and on the next day, he paid ‘Thomas

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hewode’ for ‘[a] womones gowne of black vellvett for the playe of A womon kylld wth kyndnes’. These records suggest that Anne, the adulterous wife in Thomas Heywood’s A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603), might have worn a black velvet gown, possibly with some linings, in the original production, and this costume might also have been used to represent widows in later plays. While these clues outside play-texts are rather indecisive, stage directions and characters’ speeches reveal many things about widows’ costumes, accessories, and other attributes. In the following part of this chapter, I will discuss physical features and cultural meanings of costumes and props, specifically rings, handkerchiefs, and books, which are frequently associated with widows in early modern plays, and how these objects might have signified the ambiguity of widows’ social position and sexuality on the early modern stage.

A. Costumes

As already mentioned, widows appear in either mourning or ordinary costumes in early modern plays. There are three main types of occasion on which widows appear in mourning garments. The first occasion is when they attend funeral processions. In Shakespeare’s Richard III (1591-97), 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.). Similarly, in Thomas Middleton’s Michaelmas Term (1604-7), Thomasine follows the ‘counterfeit corse’ (IV.iv.52 s.d.) of her husband with other mourners, all dressed in ‘mourning weeds’ (V.iii.4). Although John Marston neither specifies the widow’s costume nor indicates her as a mourner, Maria in Antonio’s Revenge (1600-1) is almost certainly dressed in mourning garments as she follows her husband’s coffin, considering how meticulously Marston reproduces a

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66 The stage direction appears only in the First Folio (1623), which gives more stage directions than the First Quarto (1597). Since the text in the printed edition of The Norton Shakespeare is based on the First Quarto, here and after, I use William Shakespeare, Richard III, ed. Janis Lull, updated edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) when quotations are unique to the Folio text.
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heraldic funeral in his stage direction (II.i.0 s.d.).\(^{67}\) The second occasion is when widows have lost their husbands very recently. In Middleton’s *The Puritan* (1606-7), 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* (c. 1601-8) also opens with the entrance of the main characters ‘all in black’, including the Countess of Roussillon, whose husband has lately deceased (I.i.0 s.d.). Similarly, Lady Mosely who has lost her husband two months ago appears ‘in mourning, veiled’ (sig. B3\(^r\)) in T. B.’s *The Country Girl* (1632-c. 1633).\(^{68}\) Finally, on the last type of occasion, 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. B1\(^r\)). In Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1614), the Duchess of Milan has been wearing ‘funeral weeds’ (I.i.3) for seven years, following her vow of chastity to her deceased husband.\(^{69}\) Eugenia in George Chapman’s *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1601-3) is also teased by her uncle for keeping her chastity and ‘wilful-widow’s-three-years black weed’ (II.i.56-57).\(^{70}\)

As Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson maintain, the descriptions of mourning costumes in early modern plays are ‘often generic rather than specific’ and rarely explain the details of these garments.\(^{71}\) On the other hand, the mourning veil is often mentioned in stage directions individually. As represented in portraits and woodcuts, widows’ mourning veils were presumably black on the early modern stage. In Shakespeare and John

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Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613-14), three widowed queens who petition Theseus are dressed ‘in black, with veils stained’ (I.i.24 s.d.). As modern editors generally agree, ‘stained’ probably means ‘dyed black’.

Along with Leontes’ speech quoted above, it implies that some widows might have dyed their ordinary clothes 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’ to deceive the widow’s suitors, one of them argues that he can see her beauty ‘[t]hrough this thin veile’ (sig. C1’). Apart from mourning veils, widows occasionally adorn their mourning costumes with some ornaments. In Philip 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).

Although playwrights rarely describe the details of mourning costumes, it is almost certain that they expected some special theatrical effects when they specified widows to appear in these garments. First, playwrights might have employed widows’ black costumes to create a dismal, tragic atmosphere on the stage. As various critics argue, black hangings were often used to denote tragedy and death in early modern theatre, especially on the Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage. In the Induction to an anonymous play, *A Warning for Fair Women* (1595-99), where Tragedy, Comedy, and History argue whose play should be acted, History and Comedy surrender after noting that ‘[t]he stage is hung with blacke’ and that ‘[t]he Auditors [are] preparde for Tragedie’ (ll. 82-83).

In Shakespeare’s collaborative work, *Henry VI, Part 1* (1592), Henry V’s funeral procession is introduced by Bedford’s order ‘[h]ung be the heavens with black’ (I.i.1). Like these hangings, widows’

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75 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.
black costumes might have signified death and tragedy on the early modern stage. Indeed, mourning garments were often associated with *memento mori* in this period. For instance, John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury in the final years of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, argues that mourning apparel is ‘profitable to put a man in mind of his own mortality, seeing it carrieth a remembrance of death with it’ in his *Defence of the Answer to the Admonition* (1574). This dismal image of widows’ mourning garments as a visual sign of death is often augmented by other ominous objects in early modern drama.

In *The Insatiate Countess* (1608-13), which was probably begun by Marston and completed by William Barksted and Lewis Machin, 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.). Though not precisely a widow, Jolenta in Webster’s *The Devil’s Law-Case* (1617-19) 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. Importantly, these objects – a mourning costume, a table covered with black cloth, black tapers, a skull, and a religious book – not only signify death themselves, but also make a widow into an object of *memento mori*, whose presence reminds the onlooker of his/her own death as well as the death of the widow’s husband. This disturbing effect of widows in black costumes is also stressed by being juxtaposed with white costumes for wedding ceremonies. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the black garments of the three widowed queens are clearly contrasted with the ‘white robe’ of Hymen’s boy,

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'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 struck the early modern audience. Shakespeare might have employed a similar stage picture in King John (1594-98), 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 appeared 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 in a dark, dismal atmosphere to the play.

Considering that widows’ mourning garments are strongly related to images of death and tragedy, it is appropriate that playwrights often indicate the end of widows’ mourning and the beginning of their new lives by making widows cast off their black garments. In More Dissemblers, the Duchess takes off her ‘black’ garment and orders her maid to ‘[s]eek out the lightest colours can be got, / The youthfull’st dressings’ after she falls in love with Andrugio (II.i.1-2). By changing her costume, the Duchess liberates herself from the vow of chastity enforced by her deceased husband and asserts her own will to remarry and sexual desires. 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 to his nephew as follows: ‘The garments of her widowhood laid by, / She now appears as glorious as the spring’ (III.iii.3-4). Although Lady Alworth’s affection to Wellborne is merely a disguise, she eventually marries Lord Lovell, the most powerful and virtuous man in the play. Finally, the Duchess Rosauna in James Shirley’s The Cardinal (1641), who has recently finished ‘my year of mourning’ (I.ii.11) and now expects remarriage, takes 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). Although the Duchess’s

remarriage turns out to be a tragic one in Shirley’s tragedy, the change from mourning to ordinary costume and widows’ progress to their new lives are generally represented positively in these plays.

However, it is incorrect to assume that widows’ mourning garments only signified widowhood, death, and tragedy. For, somewhat paradoxically, they could also denote widows’ marriageability and sexual availability. The early modern audience was probably conscious of this paradox, considering that some real-life widows might have expressed their inclination toward remarriage by adapting rather than casting off their mourning costumes. This practice was well established in early modern Italy. For instance, in Venice, widows were expected to ‘wear a train and put on no colored clothing’, while ‘they want to remain widowed’. However, ‘if they decide to marry again, without blame they may wear some jewellery, though not of striking appearance, and uncover their hair to some degree, all of which serves to inform others of their intention’. A similar practice might have been in use in England. The portrait of Katherine Villiers, duchess of Buckingham, 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. 25).

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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 to Randall MacDonnell, second earl and first marquis of Antrim, around the same time as this portrait was completed.\(^8\) The portrait might have been commissioned by the Duchess to be sent to her prospective husband, which was probably not an extraordinary practice in early modern Europe. For instance, when Henry VIII was contemplating his third marriage, he was presented with Hans Holbein’s portrait of Christina, Duchess of Milan,

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\(^8\) *Van Dyck and Britain*, ed. Karen Hearn (London: Tate, 2009), p. 91.
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who was represented as a young widow in complete black. These examples demonstrate how easily widows could turn their mourning costumes from the visual sign of death and tragedy to the means to express their intention of remarriage. This fluidity in the cultural meanings of widows’ mourning costumes is not totally surprising, considering that black garments were traditionally thought to enhance widows’ beauty by acting as a foil to their white skin with red cheeks, and even to attract men. For example, Chaucer repeatedly implies that Troilus has been attracted to Criseyde precisely because she was wearing black: ‘She, this in blak, likyng 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). Similarly, Thomas Edgar’s The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights (1632) relates how one widow in black attracted men’s attention:

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

A widow’s mourning garment, then, not only makes her a relic of her deceased husband and an object of memento mori, but also advertises the widow as a marriageable woman to potential suitors. Indeed, some widows in early modern plays deploy their mourning costumes to seduce men. Lelia, a sensual widow in Fletcher and Beaumont’s The Captain (1609-12), 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 the means to seduce

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Roberto. It is notable how subtly Isabella appropriates terms and objects meant for mourning to arouse her lover. First, she responds to his profession of love as follows: ‘I’ faith, my lord, I had a month’s mind unto you’ (I.i.89). ‘[A] month’s mind’, usually a funeral service held a month after death, here refers to Isabella’s strong desires for Roberto. She then puts out one of the black tapers:


Isabella thus drives away her deceased husband from her memory and invites Roberto to the bed. These representations of widows’ costumes are ironical, considering that these garments were traditionally made sombre and unfashionable to deprive widows of their sexual attraction. It is likely that widows’ mourning costumes reminded the audience of widows’ sexual availability as well as bereavement whenever they were represented on the early modern stage.

When widows appear in ordinary clothes, the distinguishing feature of their costumes is luxury. This is especially important for plays about a widow hunt, which dramatizes mercenary men’s pursuit of wealthy widows, because widows’ costumes must explain their allure for such suitors. In Fletcher’s Wit without Money (1614-15), 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 describes her clothes as ‘gay and glorious’ (III.ii.83). In Shirley’s The Lady of Pleasure (1635), Celestina is represented in a similar way. According to her parasite, ‘[s]he is full of jewels’ and ‘her garments have all grace and ornament’ (I.i.274-76). While these are general descriptions, more specific items worn by widows are also 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 other material for the ruff was expensive, and it required a lot of

hard work from servants or laundresses to keep it laundered and starched. In Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14), the Duchess orders her maid to ‘mend my ruff’ (II.i.113), while the Widow in Nathan Field’s *Amends for Ladies* (1610-11) scolds her maid (actually her suitor in disguise) for taking too much time on pinning her ruff (II.iv.44-45). Another common item is the farthingale. In *Malfi*, Bosola craves for the Duchess’s ‘bawd farthingales’ to be blown up by wind (II.i.148). In Lording Barry’s *Ram-Alley* (1607-8), Sir Oliver Smallshanks, an elderly suitor to the widow, creeps under her farthingale to hide away from Captain Face, the widow’s robust suitor (II.1250-51).

While playwrights use widows’ costumes to indicate their wealth and high status, they also criticize their richness by associating it with widows’ pride 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 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 former parasites. Some playwrights indicate widows’ vanity by referring to specific types of ruffs. In Lewis Machin’s *Every Woman in her Humour* (1606-8), the citizen’s wife, who, in a manner reminiscent of the Wife of Bath, claims to have buried six husbands, 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). The ruff of the same size is mentioned by Philip Stubbes in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), where he condemns it as ‘monstrous’ (l. 1154). In W. R.’s *A Match at Midnight* (1621-23), Widow Wagge commands her maid to fetch a new

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90 [Lewis Machin], *Everie Woman in her Humor* (London, 1609).
ruff from her seamstress and asks: ‘did yee bid her hollow it just in the French fashion cut?’ (III.i.70-71).\textsuperscript{92} This item is also derided in Edmund Howes’s expanded edition of John Stow’s \textit{The Annales} (1615), which explains that the fashion actually originated in England and was called ‘the English Monster’ by the French.\textsuperscript{93}

An item worn by widows is sometimes associated with sexual innuendos. In \textit{Patient Grissil} (1600) by Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, and William 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 masculinity.\textsuperscript{94} When the same accessory appears in Dekker’s \textit{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).\textsuperscript{95} The same phallic image of pinning accessories to widows’ costumes appears in \textit{Amends for Ladies}, where the widow’s suitor, disguising himself as her maid, tries to pin the widow’s ruff and pricks her by mistake (II.iv.44-45).

Considering that early modern playwrights often associate widows’ costumes with vanity as well as sensuality, it is unsurprising that widows are often named after rich fabric. In \textit{Ram-Alley}, a wealthy mercer’s widow is called Tafata, an early form of taffeta, ‘a plain-wove glossy silk’.\textsuperscript{96} Taffeta is repeatedly mentioned in Tudor sumptuary laws, and its use for outer garments was restricted to those who ‘may dispense £100 by the year’ and their wives in a statute issued on 16 June 1574.\textsuperscript{97} Miniver in \textit{Satiromastix} is also named after ‘a kind of fur’, used especially ‘as a lining and trimming for ceremonial

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{92} W. R., \textit{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.
  \item \textsuperscript{94} Korda, \textit{Labors Lost}, pp. 133-36.
  \item \textsuperscript{95} James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, p. 106.
  \item \textsuperscript{96} ‘taffeta | taffety, n. and adj.’, \textit{OED}, A.a [accessed 3 July 2016].
\end{itemize}
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costumes’. It similarly appears in Margaret Beaufort’s sartorial regulations, which restricted its use to the ladies of high rank. The names of these citizen widows, both of whom try to remarry a gentleman, clearly indicate their ambition for social advancement. Though not precisely a name of fabric, Middleton names a rich widow ‘Mistress Goldenfleece’ in No Wit, No Help Like a Womans (1611). Like Jason’s quest for the Golden Fleece, many mercenary suitors in early modern plays pursue wealthy widows, whose great fortune is often reflected in their naming after rich fabrics.

B. Rings

Widows were generally 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 was 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. 26 and 27). Although the custom already existed in the fourteenth century, the earliest examples of these rings survive from the late fifteenth century.  

Fig. 26 (Left). Ring, 1550-1600, made in England, museum number 13-1888. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Used with permission.

Fig. 27 (Right). Ring, c. 1600, made in England, museum number M.18-1929. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Used with permission.

98 ‘miniver, n. and adj.’, OED, A.1 [accessed 3 July 2016].
99 BL Harley MS 1776, fol. 8v.
100 Oman, p. 71.
These rings were the objects of *memento mori*, as well as the remembrance of the deceased. The inscription on the ring on the left reads: ‘†BEHOLD THE ENDE’. In Richard Brome’s *The Northern Lass* (1629), Howdee jokes about his mistress’s death’s-head ring when 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.i.322). Some stage widows are associated with more than one ring. In *The Variety* (1639-42) by William Cavendish, first duke of Newcastle upon Tyne, Mistress Voluble finds ‘foure Deaths-heads’ (p. 51) in the casket of rings belonging to the old widowed mother of Simpleton. This possibly implies that she has buried four husbands, and is now embarking on the fifth marriage.\(^{101}\)

Although these rings can be technically bequeathed to widows by anyone, they are 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 implies widows’ loyalty to their deceased husbands, it is likely that the early modern audience also associated the object with moral ambiguity, for it was a common attribute of bawds in early modern plays.\(^{102}\) In *The Old Law* (1618-19) by Middleton, William Rowley, and Heywood, the Clown admonishes his wife, an old widow, to think on death in the following terms: ‘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* (1603-5), Cocledemoy 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).\(^{103}\) These references suggest that bawds usually wore these rings on their middle-finger, whereas widows might have worn them on different fingers. In the portraits discussed above, Elizabeth Stuart and Henrietta Maria

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\(^{101}\) [William Cavendish], *The Country Captaine, and The Varietie* (London, 1649).

\(^{102}\) Ollie Jones, ‘A Death’s Head on their Middle Finger’, *The Dutch Courtesan*, University of York <http://www.dutchcourtesan.co.uk/deaths-head-middle-finger/> [accessed 13 July 2016].

wear what seem to be mourning rings on their thumb and little finger. Nonetheless, the coincidence is interesting, because widows are often represented as instigators of adultery in early modern 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 might have indicated widows as bawds or sellers of other women’s bodies, the wedding ring often signified widows’ sexual gifts of their own bodies on the early modern stage. As Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson point out, rings commonly appear as love-tokens or symbolize the marriage bond in early modern plays. It is unsurprising that women are more likely to give their rings to their lovers or future spouses than men, considering the common association between the ring and the vagina. While promising sexual pleasure by giving their rings and bodies to their lovers, these women also bind their lovers to themselves, using their rings as manacles. 104 At the bereavement of a spouse, wedding rings turned into strong mementos like death’s-head rings. In the following picture, Thomas Killigrew appears with ‘his wife’s wedding ring attached to his left wrist by a black silk band’, while mourning for her untimely death (fig. 28). 105

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However, when widows present their wedding rings on stage, these objects do not appear as mementos of their deceased husbands, but as a means for widows to woo their new lovers. In Christopher Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1587-90) in collaboration with Thomas 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’, which she ‘did vow never to part with it, / But to my second husband’ (I.i.405-07) to propose to him. 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 early modern audiences probably took it as an indication of widows’ disloyalty to their deceased husbands. In *Arden of Faversham* (1587-92), Arden decries his wife’s adultery in the following terms:

Nay, on his finger did I spy the ring

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106 In the rest of my study, I follow the general scholarly convention and refer to Marlowe as the main author.
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Which at our marriage day the priest put on.
Can any grief be half so great as this? (i.17-19)\textsuperscript{107}

On the other hand, in \textit{Dido} and \textit{Malfi}, widows’ presentation 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 rings, these widows venture their bodies as well as great fortune to their new husbands.

C. Handkerchief

Handkerchiefs were also associated with widows frequently 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’.\textsuperscript{108} Although they were most commonly ‘used for wiping the face or nose, the more elegant styles [were] used for display only’.\textsuperscript{109} In his expanded edition of Stowe’s \textit{Annals} (1631), Howes describes the handkerchiefs used as love tokens by gentlewomen in Jacobean England:

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 [……] some cost five pence a piece, some twelve pence, and the richest sixteene pence.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107} Anon., \textit{Arden of Faversham}, ed. Martin White, revised edn (London: A & C Black, 2007). All further references are to this edition.
Again, according to the National Archives’ Currency Converter, the most expensive handkerchief mentioned by Howe was almost the same price as £9.95 in 2005, which sounds quite accessible. Although we know almost nothing about physical features of handkerchiefs which were used as props on the early modern stage, they are described as ‘white’ by widows in *Satiromastix* (IV.i.182) and Thomas Drue’s *The Duchess of Suffolk* (1624) (sig. F2r). The following pictures show two white handkerchiefs, which are much larger and more elaborate than those mentioned by Howes (figs. 29 and 30). Although it is unlikely that such expensive items were used as stage props, they give us some ideas of how widows’ handkerchiefs might have looked on the early modern stage.

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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 represented on the stage, handkerchiefs are similarly associated with tears in two other plays. In Chapman’s The Widow’s Tears (1603-5), 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). In *The Cardinal*, Hernando describes how the widowed Duchess made her ‘eyes red, and wept a handkercher’ (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 ‘I 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, ‘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 that handkerchiefs began to symbolize widows’ tears in two different cultures around the same time.

At the same time, however, the fact that widows’ handkerchiefs almost automatically signify their tears enables some widows to pretend their sorrow by displaying these objects on the stage. In Shirley’s *Love Tricks, or the School of Compliment* (1625), Gasparo gives a lecture 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). Similarly, in Francis Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Cupid’s Revenge* (1606-11), Bacha, a prostitute widow, appears with a handkerchief on the stage, calling herself ‘a widdow, full of teares in shewe’ (II.ii.39) to

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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 in various ways by widows in early modern plays.

D. 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’.\(^{115}\) Stage widows are generally 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 generally 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’.\(^{116}\) In early modern plays, there are two types of occasion on which widows are associated with religious texts. First, playwrights represent widows with prayer books to emphasize their virtue and moral uprightness. In Fletcher and Massinger’s The Custom of the Country (1619-20), Guiomar, the virtuous widow mother, appears on stage with a prayer book and says in kneeling:

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[...]
\text{those devotions I am to pay}
\]
\[
\text{Are written in my heart, not in this booke,}
\]
\[
\text{And I shall reade them there without a taper. (II.iv.5-7)}
\]

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 everyday basis. Although, as discussed above, religious books can

\(^{115}\) Dessen and Thomson, p. 34.

\(^{116}\) Williamson, p. 153.
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 prayers and religious activities in prescriptive literature even after the Reformation, it is appropriate that these virtuous widows appear with prayer books on the stage.\(^{117}\)

Religious books can also signify widows’ penitence for murder or adultery in early modern plays, as we have seen in the woodcut of Anne Turner (fig. 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. Similarly, 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. 2702-04). According to Charles D. 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.\(^{118}\) 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 toward her.\(^{119}\)

A complex example appears in *The White Devil* (1611-12), when Vittoria enters ‘with a book in her hand’ (V.vi.0 s.d.) after Brachiano’s death.\(^{120}\) Vittoria, who has been accused for not appearing ‘like a widow’ in

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\(^{117}\) Oakes, pp. 58-59.


\(^{119}\) Williamson, pp. 171-72.

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‘a mourning habit’ (III.ii.121-22) at her trial for adultery and murder of her first husband, 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 at Flamineo complicates our understanding of the object. Together with the widows’ handkerchiefs in Love Tricks and Cupid’s Revenge discussed above, 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. I will explore this ambiguity of widows’ outward expressions of sorrow further in Chapter Two.

While widows often appear with religious books, which generally indicate their virtue, piety, chastity, or contrition, they are also associated with romantic, possibly amorous, books in early modern plays. 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 Phoeb[o] 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 Phoeb[o], 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’ or ‘ridiculous’ in the seventeenth century, and were frequently associated with a female readership.121 Taffata’s indulgence in these romances, then, might have indicated her ignorance or vulgar taste to

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the early modern audience. Indeed, widows’ infatuation with romances or other types of fictions, including plays, is often associated with their idleness and shallow mind in early modern plays. For instance, in Sir Aston Cokayn’s *The Obstinate Lady* (c. 1630-42), 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 Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* (1590), and is ‘no more houswife then you or I’ (p. 302). The fact that Vandona is enchanted with Lorece’s account of ‘the South Indies’, which is actually a patchwork of various romances, including ‘the Knight o’th Sun, Amadis de Guale [sic], and Palmerin de Oliva’ (p. 318), also implies that she is incapable of distinguishing reality from fiction. Similarly, in William Cartwright’s *The Siege*, written in 1628-38, 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 winning her marriage to a tyrant king, who is clearly more interested in virgins.

At the same time, however, Taffata’s consumption of romances is also problematic, because these stories are often explicit about female sexuality. It is suggestive 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 […] between gentlewomen and their chambermaids’ in early modern drama. Placed between her mistress and her suitors, the chambermaid is technically given the authority to admit or refuse visitants to the widow. By closing the widow’s chamber against her new husband and sharing amorous stories with her mistress, Adriana is implied to become Taffata’s accomplice in making her old suitor a cuckold. While widows do not necessarily carry

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122 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]).
books in these plays, Lady Love-all in Thomas Killigrew’s *Parson’s Wedding* (1640-41), 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’ (p. 462).  

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. By representing widows who read erotic books as well as religious ones, these plays address such anxieties among early modern spectators.

As I discussed above, widows were associated with a variety of costumes, accessories, and other attributes in early modern England. First, I related the history of widows’ mourning garments to highlight the complexity of their cultural and symbolic meanings. By using portraits and woodcuts, I also tried to reconstruct how widows might have looked in reality and on the stage. Then, I discussed costumes and props, specifically rings, handkerchiefs, and books, which are often associated with widows in early modern plays. By using stage directions, speeches, and visual images, I discussed the physical features of these items and how they might have affected the images of widows on the early modern stage.

As I stressed through this chapter, complex meanings of costumes and other items associated with widows in reality or on the stage reflect widows’ ambiguous social position and problematic sexuality in early modern England. On one hand, mourning garments and other accessories make a widow into a relic of her deceased husband, visual sign of death and tragedy, or paragon of virtuous and chaste widowhood. On the other hand, the same objects indicate a widow’s marriageability or sexual availability, as well as her intention to marry another man and start a new life. This fluidity of meanings of objects

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associated with widows importantly highlights the liminal status of widows between death and life, chastity and sexual availability, or past and future, which I will explore further in subsequent chapters. It is also significant that widows often appropriate or subvert the original meanings of these objects to pursue their new love. The fact that these objects are mere external signs which can be exploited or disguised by widows is important, because this ambiguity can also be seen in widows’ gestures, which I will discuss in the next chapter.
Chapter Two

Lamenting Widows and Lusty Widows:
The Construction of Basic Types of Widows in Elizabethan Drama

This chapter considers the development of two basic types of widows in early modern plays, the lamenting widow and the lusty widow, by mainly focusing on Marlowe’s plays and early plays by Shakespeare. As modern critics have long recognized, there are two major types of widows in early modern literature: the virtuous widow and the lusty widow. Since lamentation is an outward expression of widows’ virtue, there are many overlaps between the virtuous widow and the lamenting widow. On the other hand, as Tobias Döring, Katharine Goodland, and Bridget Escolme have noted, lamentation can also be a performance or pretence of virtue.¹ As I discussed in Chapter One, widows often display their attributes or accessories, including handkerchiefs and religious texts, to pretend their sorrow and virtue in early modern plays. Along with these objects, stage widows also appropriate various gestures to enact lamentations, be they sincere or feigned, as I will discuss in this chapter and the next. To highlight this issue of the performativity of widows’ lamentations and virtue, it is helpful to reformulate the conventional opposition between the virtuous widow and the lusty widow, and consider how the theatrical figures of the lamenting widow and the lusty widow emerged and developed on the Elizabethan stage.

The representation of lamenting widows and lusty widows dates back to antiquity. As already mentioned in the Introduction, the figure of the lusty widow appears in Petronius’s *Satyricon*, a first-century Roman satirical novel, whose story of the faithless Ephesian widow was appropriated by Chapman in *The Widow’s Tears* (1603-5), as I will discuss in Chapter Three. The figure

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of the lamenting widow appears in the Bible, which repeatedly describes widows as helpless figures who, together with orphans, must be protected by God:

Ye shalt 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)

Although the crier to God is gendered as ‘he’ in the Geneva Bible, the description of God’s vengeance 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 lamentations with a formidable power to provoke God’s vengeance. A similar association between widows’ lamentations and God’s vengeance appears in the following parable. 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 [sic] his elect, [which] crye day and night unto him […]?’ (Luke 18:1-7). Again, while articulating the righteousness of her claim, the Bible represents the widow’s lamentations as troublesome and disturbing. These ambiguities in the Bible anticipate the problematic representation of lamenting widows in Elizabethan plays.

In this chapter, I will first present an overview of the figure of the lamenting widow in early modern non-dramatic texts, in order to give a contextual background for the present chapter and the next. Then, I will consider the early representation of lamenting widows in Marlowe’s Tamburlaine the Great (1587) and Shakespeare’s Richard III (1591-97),

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2 Sutherland, pp. 2-3. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Bible in this chapter are from the Geneva Bible.
which portray widows’ lamentations as genuine but problematic. Finally, I will examine the representation of lusty widows by the same playwrights and their contemporaries, and consider how the two types of widows may have interacted. A few plays from the 1600s, including Hamlet (1600-2), will be examined in Chapter Three, where I will discuss the transition from late Elizabethan to early Jacobean plays by focusing on their sceptical views of widows’ lamentations as well as their representations of the husband’s ghost.

1. Lamenting Widows in Early Modern Culture

In early modern England, there were general expectations about how widows should react to their husbands’ deaths. Although the ritual of mourning was much abbreviated and simplified after the Reformation, many reformers perceived King David’s mourning for Absalom and other biblical examples as scriptural sanction to lament over the dead and commended moderate mourning. 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’. Similarly, in his manual for epistle writing, The English Secretorie (1586), Angel Day gives an example of a consolatory letter for a widow, in which he praises her for having ‘waded sufficiently in your teares […] in earnest love as beseemed a wife’. On the other hand, widows’ excessive mourning was often condemned, although Catholic writers’ attitudes were more mixed than those of Protestant writers. For instance, Fulvio Androzzi, a Jesuit priest, commends one historical widow who mourned for her husband by ‘extreme weeping, sighing, & drowninge of her

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3 Goodland, p. 5; Phillippy, pp. 25, 129. On the abbreviation of mourning in post-Reformation England, see Chapter Three below.
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selfe almost in teares’ in *The Widdowes Glass* (1621), dedicated to a Catholic widow and circulated among recusants. By contrast, Vives condemns widows’ excessive lamentations unequivocally, arguing 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.

Day also censures those ‘foolish creatures, that are neither governed by wit, nor ordered by discretion’, and make themselves ‘a spectacle to the world’. It is notable that both Vives and Day derive their arguments from the Christian belief in resurrection. Since God has taken away their husbands, widows should not mourn excessively, but rather rejoice that their beloved ones have joined Jesus in ‘eternal beatitude’. Widows’ excessive mourning also undermines their reputation, making them a ‘show’ or ‘spectacle to the world’. Thomas Fuller, an Anglican clergyman, expresses similar ideas 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 lamentations: ‘such widows grief is quickly emptyed, which streameth out at so large a vent’.

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6 Lessius and Androzzi, p. 314.
7 Vives, pp. 302-03.
8 Day, p. 216.
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These writers often associate widows’ lamentation with histrionic gestures such as beating the body or tearing hair, but these might draw upon older literary and artistic traditions more than early modern social practice. Vives gives an extensive list of such gestures as he condemns widows’ excessive mourning:

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.¹¹

As his reference to the classical world suggests, Vives’s description of widows’ lamentation does not necessarily reflect the social reality of early modern England. 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.¹² For instance, in Simone Martini’s *The Entombment* (1335/40), one woman ‘frantically throws up her arms’, while another woman ‘tears her hair in a broad impressive movement’.¹³ Although, as I will discuss, such gestures appear frequently in early modern plays, there is no record of early modern widows making these particular gestures in reality.

¹¹ Vives, p. 303.
¹³ Barasch, p. 78.
Nevertheless, there are records of the mourning of early modern widows as having physical symptoms and involving visible signs and behaviours. When Lady Margaret Sidney was widowed for the second time by the death of Thomas Sidney, brother of Sir Philip Sidney, in 1595, Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby, her husband-to-be, visited the widow two months later and found her ‘layde complayninge of payne in her eyes and heade’, caused by her ‘greate lamentacion for the losse of the worthy gentleman her late husbande’. Margaret’s distress was so serious that ‘she coulde not then speake of him without teares’. 14 Although widows’ lamentation seems praiseworthy as it signifies their profound love for their deceased husbands, this was not always the case. Frances Stuart, duchess of Richmond, mourned for her husband so excessively that her demeanour provoked criticism and

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In his letter dated 21 February 1624, John Chamberlain describes how the Duchess took her husband’s death ‘extreme passonatly, [and] cut of her haire that day with divers other demonstrations of extraordinarie griefe’. 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 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’. Chamberlain’s criticism of the Duchess’s unseasonable ‘passion’ is interesting. Although Patricia Phillippy argues that a widow’s ‘passion of excessive grief’ was ‘a cultural necessity’ which ‘displace[d] the more threatening sexual passions’, the Duchess’s excessive grief might have rather aroused male anxiety over such passions of elder widows. Chamberlain’s criticism of the widow’s vehement lamentation might also have been related to the fact that her deceased husband, Lodovick Stuart, was suspected of Catholicism. As Döring notes, ‘extrovert performances of grief – in voice, body, gesture and behaviour’ were often attacked as popish by English reformers. The Duchess’s excessive mourning and preparation of her husband’s funeral with too much ‘solemnitie and ado’ might have renewed this suspicion.

These non-dramatic texts, including historical accounts of real-life widows, reveal ambiguous attitudes toward widows’ lamentation in the early modern period. It is interesting how easily widows’ lamentation could turn into an object of either praise and sympathy, or censure and suspicion. This fluidity appears most problematically in early modern plays, in which stage

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15 Gittings, pp. 192-93; Goodland, pp. 115-16.
18 Phillippy, p. 27. Italics hers.
19 Rob Macpherson, ‘Stuart, Ludovick, second duke of Lennox and duke of Richmond (1574-1624)’, *ODNB* [accessed 5 July 2016].
20 Döring, p. 32.
widows often express their sorrow by making histrionic gestures, as usually indicated by stage directions or characters’ speeches. In the next part of this chapter, I will examine the representation of lamenting widows in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* and Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. While associating widows’ lamentations and violent gestures with their genuine grief, Marlowe and Shakespeare anticipate early seventeenth-century playwrights’ scepticism by representing these women as problematic figures, whose gestures and lamenting voices often disturb the audience as well as other characters.

2. Lamenting Widows in Marlowe and Early Shakespeare

A. Suicidal Lamenting Widows in *Tamburlaine the Great*

In each part of *Tamburlaine*, 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, presumably by putting them under the stage trapdoors or dragging them into the discovery space, ‘[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.

It is noteworthy that both Zabina’s and Olympia’s deaths are Marlowe’s inventions. Although Perondinus’s Latin source (1553) relates the braining of Bajazeth, it does not mention his widow’s suicide. Olympia’s burning of the bodies, her trick on Theridamas, and his unexpected slaying of her are also created by Marlowe from various sources.21 As Thomas Healy maintains, Marlowe’s plays generally reveal his ‘fascination with the

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shocking and spectacular’.²² It is therefore unsurprising that he tried to shock his audience by staging the violent deaths of these widows.

Apart from his characteristic sensationalism, Marlowe’s staging of the lamenting widows’ suicidal deaths might have been induced by the play’s exotic setting. As Oakes explains, attitudes toward widows’ self-sacrifice were highly mixed in the early modern period. Although early modern 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 as sin.²³ The Asian setting of Tamburlaine, then, might have given Marlowe licence to stage many kinds of extreme and outrageous acts, including the widows’ suicidal deaths. Indeed, it may not be a coincidence that Olympia’s desire to be ‘cast’ in the same ‘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.²⁴ While Olympia’s speech primarily refers back to Dido’s burning of her body after Aeneas’s departure, which Marlowe himself dramatized in Dido (1587-90), 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. For instance, 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’.²⁵ In his popular costume book (1590; 1598), Cesare 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 with their husbands’.²⁶ Although several critics have demonstrated that early modern English intellectuals were fairly knowledgeable about different parts

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²⁴ Marlowe, Tamburlaine, ed. Cunningham, p. 265.
²⁶ Vecellio, p. 469.
of Asia, it is likely that Marlowe’s first audience readily conflated one Asian region with another.27

On the other hand, Marlowe does not simply use his widow characters to satisfy the audience’s desire for sensational spectacles or to titillate their interest in the exotic world. Marlowe incorporates these women’s lamentations and violent deaths in his ambiguous and morally challenging presentation of Tamburlaine. In Part One, Marlowe’s attitude toward Tamburlaine’s valour and military prowess is ambivalent but more positive than Part Two, and he basically represents the downfall of Bajazeth and Zabina as a foil to Tamburlaine’s magnificence. Although the Turkish couple’s lives in slavery seem pitiful, Marlowe carefully restricts the audience’s sympathy by representing their miseries as just punishment for their arrogance and antagonism to Christianity.28 Indeed, as Richard Levin shows, Marlowe’s contemporary audiences seem to have enjoyed the spectacle of Tamburlaine using the domineering Muslim ruler as a footstool.29 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.30 Although the audience remains largely sympathetic to Tamburlaine, the fact that his treatment of the couple deteriorates as he proceeds with the problematic three-day siege of Damascus complicates their response to Tamburlaine.

The audience’s mixed feelings toward Tamburlaine culminate at his execution of the Virgins of Damascus, and, to a less extent, at the Turkish

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couples committing suicide. While representing their deaths as deserved, Marlowe allows Zabina and Bajazeth to arouse some pity in the audience by staging their personal exchange before their suicidal deaths. It seems that the couple’s predicaments 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

\[
\ldots\text{words of ruth,}
\]

\[
\text{That would with pitty chear Zabinas heart}
\]

\[
\text{And make our soules resolve in ceasles tears[.] (Tam 1, V.i.270-72)}
\]

Words, which have only been used by the couple to curse at Tamburlaine, are here described as a means to share their miseries and dissolve their separated souls into one stream of ‘ceasles tears’. 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

\[
\text{I may poure foorth my soule into thine armes,}
\]

\[
\text{With words of love: whose moaning entercourse}
\]

\[
\text{Hath hitherto bin staid, with wrath and hate}
\]

\[
\text{Of our expreslesse band inflicted. (Tam 1, V.i.279-82)}
\]

Although the sexual meaning of ‘intercourse’ did not exist before the nineteenth century, the image of Bajazeth’s pouring of his soul into Zabina’s arms blurs the distinction between the spiritual and the physical, and illustrates their union in both terms.\(^{31}\) Zabina also responds to her husband’s loving words in a similar manner:

\[
\text{Sweet Bajazeth, I will prolong thy life,}
\]

\[
\text{As long as any blood or sparke of breath}
\]

\[
\text{Can quench or coole the torments of my griefe. (Tam 1, V.i.283-85)}
\]

\(^{31}\) ‘intercourse, n.’, OED, 2.d [accessed 5 July 2016].
It is ironical 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 miserable life by braining himself against the iron cage. It is significant that Zabina not only commits her body to the same fate as her husband’s by braining herself, but also cries before her suicide as follows: ‘I come, I come, I come’ ([Tam 1, V.i.319]). Although the first record of a sexual meaning for the verb ‘to come’ also appears only in the mid-seventeenth century, Zabina’s suicide may signify her wish to be reunited with her husband and to have ‘moaning intercourse’ with him.32

Zabina’s vehement lamentation at her husband’s sudden death not only conveys her intense grief, but also disturbs the heroic image of Tamburlaine to some extent.33 As soon as she discovers the corpse of her husband lying on the stage, Zabina 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.305-09])

After these lines, Zabina’s speech collapses into prose with many fragments and confused images as she goes mad. It is notable that Zabina’s disoriented speech in prose not only disturbs the textual regularity of Tamburlaine, which is exceptionally metrical, but also makes a clear contrast with Tamburlaine’s heroic speech in verse. As modern critics generally agree, the strength of Tamburlaine as a dramatic 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

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32 ‘come, v.’, OED, 17 [accessed 5 July 2016].
by the action’ of the protagonist.\textsuperscript{34} Indeed, Tamburlaine has a power to remould reality into images which are favourable to himself. 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’ (\textit{Tam 1}, V.i.139), becomes a paragon of beauty in Tamburlaine’s poetic speech: ‘\textit{Flora} in her mornings pride, / Shaking her silver tresses in the aire’ (\textit{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 of Tamburlaine’s cruelty. Although it is almost impossible to elucidate every meaning of her distracted speech, it is significant that 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’ (\textit{Tam 1}, V.i.313-14).\textsuperscript{35} Zabina’s cry was presumably intended to evoke 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, not only because Zabina herself is a mother and therefore an appropriate figure to represent another mother’s misery, but also because it associates her misery with that of Zenocrate as well as the women of Damascus. Indeed, the deaths of Zabina and her husband arouse not only pity but also anxiety for her own fate in Zenocrate: ‘Ah what may chance to thee, \textit{Zenocrate}?’ (\textit{Tam 1}, V.i.372). As Zenocrate understands correctly, the dead bodies of the Turkish couple represent what would befall Zenocrate if she loses Tamburlaine’s favour. In this context, Pam Whitfield’s claim that Zabina’s obscure speech, ‘I, even I, speak to her’ (\textit{Tam 1}, V.i.314-15), may be a warning to Zenocrate sounds plausible.\textsuperscript{36} Zabina’s lamentation and violent death thus create a link between

\textsuperscript{36} Pam Whitfield, ‘“Divine Zenocrate,” “Wretched Zenocrate”: Female Speech and Disempowerment in \textit{Tamburlaine I}, \textit{Renaissance Papers}’ (2000), 87-98 (p. 94).
women who are in different positions, but equally victimized by the ‘ruthlesse cruelty of Tamburlaine’ (Tam 1, V.i.347), and complicate our response to him.

Still, Marlowe eventually recovers the heroic image of Tamburlaine by making the Turkish couple a foil to his victory as well as his true love for Zenocrate. In the end, Tamburlaine saves the King of Egypt, showing that Zenocrate’s repeated pleas have finally won him: ‘She […] hath calmde the furie of my sword’ (Tam 1, V.i.438). Tamburlaine’s demonstration of his true love for Zenocrate not only enables him to re-emerge as a favourable figure by offsetting his cruelty during the siege of Damascus, but also makes a contrast with Bajazeth’s lack of affection to his wife. Although Bajazeth speaks to Zabina lovingly, his indulging speech is soon revealed as a mere tactic to dismiss his wife to fetch some water, so that he can kill himself in her absence. In this context, the Turkish couple who ‘[h]ave desperatly dispatcht their slavish lives’ (Tam 1, V.i.473) and now ‘lie breathlesse at [Tamburlaine’s] feet’ (Tam 1, V.i.470) become a perfect foil to Tamburlaine and Zenocrate. While Bajazeth and Zabina have lost everything and are now unhappily reunited in death, Tamburlaine and Zenocrate ascend to the throne of Persia and Africa, and are finally united in marriage.

Marlowe’s representation of Tamburlaine is even more problematic in Part Two. While echoing many actions in Part One, Marlowe encourages the audience to see them differently by stressing Tamburlaine’s cruelty and vulnerability.37 Again, Marlowe’s ambiguous attitude toward Tamburlaine is reflected in his representation of the lamenting widow. Although Olympia never confronts Tamburlaine on the stage, her conduct as a widow makes an interesting contrast with that of Tamburlaine as a widower, not only stressing Tamburlaine’s foreign, pagan identity, but also making his love for Zenocrate questionable.

As in Part One, Marlowe associates the widow’s lamentation with her genuine grief over her husband’s death. 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:

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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 desire for death is inseparable from her strong belief that she will be able to see her husband in the spiritual life after death. However ‘ugly’ *(Tam 2, III.iv.16)*, death is a ‘sweet’ agency which will ‘carie both our soules where his remaines’ *(Tam 2, III.iv.17)*. While Olympia’s stabbing of her young son and attempted suicide were probably perceived as foreign and pagan by the early modern audience, it is interesting that her concept of an afterlife is similar to that of Christianity. For instance, Olympia dismisses Theridamas’s courtship as follows:

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 [Tamburlaine] in the heavens’ *(Tam 2, II.iv.62-63)*. It is appropriate that Olympia, who cherishes life in heaven more than earthly life, 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,
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). Theridamas not only makes Olympia an object of his amorous looks, but also tries to pull down this queen of chastity from heaven to Venus’s earthly ‘chaire’ by indulging her ‘princely eie’ with luxurious objects. Theridamas’s 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). Olympia’s indifference to worldly pleasure not only reflects her profound love for her deceased husband, who ‘was dearer unto me, / Than any Viceroy, King, or Emperour’ (Tam 2, III.iv.42-43), but also indicates her strong belief in spiritual life in heaven after death.

While associating Olympia with concepts of death and afterlife which 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 describes death as an ascension to heaven and seems to share the Christian concept of death as the salvation of the immortal soul. While referring to pagan gods such as Apollo and Cynthia, Tamburlaine employs many biblical images and phrases to describe heaven. For instance, as J. S. Cunningham notes, the following passage strongly invokes Revelation 22.1:

The christall springs whose taste illuminates
Refined eies with an eternall sight
Like tried silver runs through Paradice
To entertaine divine Zenocrate. (Tam 2, II.iv.22-25)38

However, once Zenocrate is dead, Tamburlaine’s ideas of death and afterlife change completely. In his vehement lamentation, Tamburlaine denounces

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‘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). Here, Marlowe is strategically ambiguous as to whether Tamburlaine is referring to the Christian God under another name or the pagan god. In either case, Tamburlaine’s impiety or paganism should have alienated the early modern audience’s sympathy from him. It is also notable that Tamburlaine can only imagine Zenocrate’s afterlife in terms of her continuing physical presence on the earth. He even refuses to bury her body until his own death:

    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 eventually buried together with his own in a ‘rich […] tombe’ (*Tam* 2, II.iv.133) is much more important than the fate of her soul. Tamburlaine’s obsession with Zenocrate’s body not only contradicts the Christian teaching of salvation, but also seems to associate him with idolatry.

    More importantly, Tamburlaine’s refusal to bury Zenocrate makes us question the nature of his love for her. Tamburlaine’s treatment of his wife’s body appears especially problematic when it is compared with Olympia’s. Although Olympia’s burning of her husband’s and son’s bodies might have appeared 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 important 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 himself perceives Zenocrate’s body as an object which can be freely exploited for his own satisfaction. As discussed above, Tamburlaine’s love for Zenocrate plays a significant role in mitigating the audience’s negative reaction to his ruthlessness in Part One. Although it does not vindicate him completely, it
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prevents the audience from condemning him as a merciless villain even after his bloody siege of Damascus. Tamburlaine’s objectification of Zenocrate, then, might have had negative effects on the audience’s perception of him. Marlowe’s representation of Olympia as an antithesis to Tamburlaine thus complicates our response by stressing his pagan identity as well as making his love for Zenocrate questionable.

In this context, it is significant that Olympia resists Theridamas’s attempt to objectify her body by dismissing his courtship and choosing death. Although Theridamas woos Olympia by using many images and phrases borrowed from the tradition of courtly love, 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 prevale’ with her (Tam 2, IV.ii.50). As several critics maintain, ‘Theridamas’s bullying courtship of Olympia’ is ‘a frustrated mimicry’ of Tamburlaine’s ‘imperious seduction’ of Zenocrate in Part One. 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 disturbingly resembles 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 Marlowe represents lamenting widows quite differently in Parts One and Two according to his changing attitude toward Tamburlaine, it is notable that Marlowe not only associates widows’ lamentations and violent deaths with their genuine grief, but also employs these figures to emphasize his ambiguous representation of Tamburlaine. Although Marlowe strictly limits these widows’ influence on the plot, his uses of these figures foreshadow Shakespeare’s more problematic representation of lamenting widows.

B. Clamorous Lamenting Widows in *Richard III*

Unlike Marlowe’s, Shakespeare’s representation of lamenting widows has been discussed by many critics.\(^{40}\) In his history plays, widows almost invariably appear as 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 represents lamenting widows as more problematic than does Marlowe. Although Zabina’s and Olympia’s lamentations disturb the audience and challenge their positive attitudes toward Tamburlaine, these widows have no power to influence the play’s political scene. By contrast, Shakespeare’s widow characters appropriate their lamentations to manipulate male authorities, pursue their own ambitions, cling onto power derived from their deceased husbands, or overthrow male tyrants. While Oakes, Kehler, Escolm, and Gina Bloom have highlighted such problematic aspects of lamenting widows in Shakespeare’s plays, they have not examined widows’ gestures.\(^{41}\) Bevington and Döring have focused on widows’ gestures, but overlooked their disturbing effects by stressing widows’ powerlessness or perceiving these figures as the moral centre of the play.\(^{42}\) In this section, I will concentrate on *Richard III* which represents lamenting widows most extensively, and consider how these widows appear as complex, disturbing figures through their gestures and lamentations.

Shakespeare associates lamenting widows with less violent, but more diverse gestures than Marlowe, many of which are conventional and often mentioned in early modern non-dramatic texts. In *Richard III*, the first reference to such gestures appears in Richard’s wooing of Lady Anne. To thwart the lamenting widow’s direful ‘curses’ (I.ii.67), Richard argues that his murders of King Henry and Prince Edward were solicited by his love for Anne’s beauty, and asks:


\(^{42}\) See n. 52 below.
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Is not the causer of the timeless deaths
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
As blameful as the executioner? (I.ii.115-17)

The extreme provocativeness of Richard’s reasoning provokes Anne to threaten an extreme gesture: ‘If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide, / These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks’ (I.ii.123-24). As Phillippy explains, the laceration of the cheeks is one of the ‘classical gestures of immoderate mourning that display the empathy between the mourner’s physical mutilation and the body’s corruption in death’. It is notable that Anne’s speech reveals her paradoxical desire to identify herself with her murdered husband and father-in-law, as well as to punish herself as ‘the causer’ of their deaths. Anne’s desire for self-injury also reveals her ironic circumstance as Richard says of her beauty:

**Gloucester.** As all the world is cheerèd by the sun,
          So I by that; it is my day, my life!
**Anne.** Black night overshade thy day, and death thy life.
**Gloucester.** Curse not thyself, fair creature, thou art both.
**Anne.** I would I were, to be revenged on thee. (I.ii.127-31)

The exchange implies that the best way for Anne to wreak revenge upon Richard is to wreak it upon herself. In this context, Jan Kott’s argument that ‘Lady Anne goes into Richard’s bed to be destroyed’ may not be far-fetched. Like Anne, the Duchess of York is also associated with conventional gestures as she enters the stage with Clarence’s children:

**Boy.** Why do you wring your hands, and beat your breast,
          And cry, ‘O Clarence, my unhappy son’?
**Girl.** 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)

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43 On the textual conventions for *Richard III*, see Chapter One, n. 67 above.
44 Phillippy, p. 134.
To conceal their father’s death, the Duchess pretends to lament for the sick king and argues: ‘It were lost labor to weep for one that’s lost’ (II.i.11). It is notable that the Duchess’s vehement lamentation is reported rather than acted. Considering her later criticism of Queen Elizabeth’s vehement lamentation, it is appropriate that the Duchess refrains from wringing her hands or beating her breast on the stage. Indeed, both Anne and the Duchess seem to avoid making such gestures in public. While the Duchess suppresses her off-stage lamentation by dismissing it as ‘lost labor’, Anne tries to control her mourning by conducting Henry’s funeral with formality, confining her sorrow and anger in a rigid form.\(^{46}\)

By contrast, Elizabeth makes conventional, 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.)\(^{47}\) and exclaiming: ‘Oh, who shall hinder me to wail and weep, / To chide my fortune and torment myself?’ (II.ii.33-34). Although there is no stage direction, Elizabeth’s lamentation might have been accompanied by some gestures of self-injury, as suggested by her claim to ‘torment myself’. Elizabeth’s demeanour provokes the Duchess’s criticism:

\begin{quote}
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.
\end{quote}

(II.ii.37-39)

The Duchess’s criticism of Elizabeth’s ‘impatience’ importantly refers back to Lord Rivers’ earlier admonition to Elizabeth: ‘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 that other characters and the audience hear her

\(^{46}\) On the political and religious significance of Anne’s staging of the Lancastrian king’s funeral, see Döring, p. 57; Kehler, \textit{Shakespeare’s Widows}, p. 100; Phillippy, p. 131.

\(^{47}\) This stage direction appears only in the Folio text.
lamentation. On the other hand, the words ‘scene’ and ‘act’ inevitably remind us of the theatrical nature of Elizabeth’s lamentation. This is especially explicit in the First Quarto, which has ‘make’ instead of ‘mark’ as in the Folio text. While informing the incident (‘act’) of Edward’s death, Elizabeth also refers to her own enactment (‘act’) of ‘tragic violence’. Shakespeare’s awareness of the theatricality of widows’ lamentation is significant, because he develops this theme further in *Hamlet* and anticipates the satirical representation of widows’ tears in early Jacobean plays, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Shakespeare’s most significant invention, however, is the staging of widows’ collective lamentations. Although Zabina’s lamentation and violent death create a link between women in the first part of *Tamburlaine*, these women neither share their miseries nor lament together. By contrast, Shakespeare represents what is often called the widows’ chorus in two scenes, each of which follows the death of King Edward 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 presumably had an inspiration from Seneca’s *Troades*, whose four female characters – Hecuba, Andromache, Polyxena, and Helena – roughly correspond with the Duchess, Elizabeth, Anne, and Margaret.

As modern critics generally maintain, 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. On the other hand, critics tend to overlook discrepancies or tensions among the lamenting widows in an effort to stress these characters’ unity and mutual compassion. For instance, Döring writes:

50 Döring, pp. 54-56; Phillippy, pp. 126-38; Goodland, ch. 5; Oakes, pp. 147-48.
The strict parallelism of the lines functions to bind the speakers together and make their voices [...] indistinguishable, until their common cause of mourning supersedes all previous political divisions between them.\textsuperscript{51}

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 community destroyed under Richard’s rule’.\textsuperscript{52} Behind this type of criticism is an assumption that the widows’ chorus in \textit{Richard III} is a substitute for Seneca’s ‘use of a chorus standing for \textit{vox populi}’.\textsuperscript{53}

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:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Boy.} \quad \text{Good aunt, you wept not for our father’s death.}
\text{How can we aid you with your kindred tears?}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Girl.} \quad \text{Our fatherless distress was left unmoaned;}
\text{Your widow’s dolours likewise be unwept.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Queen.} \quad \text{Give me no help in lamentation.}
\text{I am not barren to bring forth laments. (II.ii.61-66)}
\end{quote}

Elizabeth has no interest in sharing other people’s lamentations, nor does she wish others to share her own. Even the Duchess, who is sympathetic toward 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’ 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, these characters try to demonstrate that their own sorrow is the greatest by crying more loudly than others.54

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 on the early modern stage.55 Though unspecified by stage directions, it is likely that Elizabeth and the Duchess also appeared in black, following the deaths of Prince Edward and the Duke of York. However, this visual image of unity and solidarity is betrayed by the widows’ discordant lamentations. While sharing the same predicament, Margaret’s attitude toward Elizabeth is a mixed one:

    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 toward 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 ironical resemblance: ‘Tell over your woes again by viewing mine’ (IV.iv.36). If there

55 Besnault and Bitot, p. 117.
is a strain of sympathy in Margaret’s speech, it is immediately suppressed by the Duchess, who counters Margaret by recalling her 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’ (IV.iv.75) Elizabeth curse at Richard, saying that she will ‘leave the burden of it all on thee’ (IV.iv.107), and exits. 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. Although critics have suggested various figures for the total number of actors used in the early modern production of Richard III, they generally agree that there were four boy actors.\(^{56}\) Assuming that all 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 parts (Prince Edward, the Duke of York, Clarence’s son and daughter, and another boy in Act 4 Scene 2). This possibility of doubling illuminates another dimension of the discordance in the widows’ lamentations. 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 – even hostility – between Elizabeth and Clarence’s children. Similarly, in the scene following the deaths of the young princes, Margaret’s mixed feelings toward 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

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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. 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 either the actors of 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 Anne, might have played Prince Edward. If so, Margaret’s sympathy toward Elizabeth could have appeared rather sincerely, 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 in Richard III.

Although Shakespeare associates widows with more conventional gestures than Marlowe, including laceration of cheeks and dishevelling of hair, his representation of lamenting widows is even more problematic than Marlowe’s. Shakespeare not only hints at the theatricality of widows’ lamentations and gestures, but also complicates our response to these widows by revealing their mutual antagonism and suspicion through their collective, but discordant, lamentations. Although we should not neglect the significant role played by these women in confronting Richard’s tyranny, it is suggestive that lamenting widows are represented as disturbing figures even when they seem to represent the moral centre of the play.

3. Lusty Widows in Elizabethan Drama

A. The Virtuous and/or Lusty Widow in Dido, Queen of Carthage

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Although modern critics have generally associated the figure of the lusty widow with Jacobean drama, she was already a popular character on the Elizabethan stage. Marlowe’s *Dido* (1587-90) is one of the earliest plays which explore the issues of widows’ sexuality and aspiration for remarriage. Although *Dido* is attributed to the Children of the Chapel Royal, it is unknown whether it was ever acted publicly. Nonetheless, it is appropriate for my study to discuss *Dido*, not only because it was possibly one of the earliest widow plays performed in a London commercial theatre, but also because it had a great influence on early modern playwrights, including Shakespeare, and might have affected their representations of widows. *Dido* also has an interesting publication history, for it was printed by ‘Widdowe Orwin’ as stated on the title-page of the 1594 quarto. Although widows were not uncommon figures in the early modern book trade, nor was it unusual for them to call themselves widows on the title-page of their publications, *Dido* is possibly a unique example of a widow play printed by a widow printer in the early modern period. Although it is beyond the scope of my study, it may be worthwhile to investigate what role the widow printer might have played in the construction of the text of *Dido* through editing or revising.

As discussed above, Marlowe represents lamenting widows whose suicidal deaths indicate their loyalty to their deceased husbands in *Tamburlaine*. By contrast, the protagonist of *Dido* has been perceived as a negative embodiment of widows’ infidelity and sensuality. While Deanne Williams and Jennifer M. Caro-Barnes argue that Marlowe applauds Queen

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60 On Joan Orwin and other widows involved in the early book trade, see Maureen Bell, ‘A Dictionary of Women in the London Book Trade, 1540-1730’, unpublished MLS dissertation (Loughborough University of Technology, 1983); *British Book Trade Index*, University of Oxford <http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/> [accessed 3 July 2016].
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 male anxiety over Elizabeth’s power as a female ruler.\(^\text{61}\) Although Stephanie Ericson Chamberlain and Mary Elizabeth Smith do not evoke this comparison between the two female rulers, they stress how Marlowe ‘rewrites the pious widow Dido’ in Virgil’s *Aeneid* ‘as an overbearing seductress’.\(^\text{62}\)

As Mary Smith and Purkiss explain, there are two distinct traditions of Dido legend. In the pre-Virgilian tradition, Elissa or Dido kills herself on a funeral pyre to ‘remain faithful to her late husband Sichaeus’ and avoid unwanted marriage to the African King Hiarbus. By contrast, the Virgilian tradition centres on the love tragedy of Dido and Aeneas, and this tradition ‘itself may be divided into two strands’. While one strand remains faithful to the *Aeneid* and represents Dido as left by ‘worthy Aeneas who loves her but must obey the gods’ command’, the other represents Dido as ‘a saint of love […] deserted unjustly by a false lover’, as exemplified by Ovid’s *Heroides*. Although both strands represent Dido sympathetically, the latter occasionally dismisses Dido’s self-sacrifice for the unworthy lover as ‘foolish’.\(^\text{63}\) Smith believes that Marlowe developed his complex characterizations of Dido and Aeneas from the works by medieval writers as well as Italian Dido drama.\(^\text{64}\) For instance, while Chaucer represents Dido sympathetically as a woman betrayed by her false lover in *The Legend of Good Women*, written in the 1370s, his attitude toward Dido and Aeneas is more ambiguous in *The House


\(^{64}\) Smith, ‘Love kindling fire’, pp. 18-22.
of Fame (1378-80), which intertwines the antithetical Virgilian and Ovidian traditions.\footnote{Smith, ‘Love kindling fire’, p. 20; Sheila Delany, Chaucer’s ‘House of Fame’: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), ch. 5.}

It is almost certain that Marlowe makes Dido a more problematic figure than Virgil, who, while introducing Dido’s new love for Aeneas, eventually represents her as a virtuous widow. On the other hand, Marlowe’s Dido is not an unequivocal representation of the lusty widow. Rather, she is an ambiguous figure whose conduct as a widow is highly questionable, but somewhat perplexingly, cannot be utterly condemned. In this section, I will discuss how Marlowe blurs the boundary between the virtuous widow and the lusty widow by conflating these antithetical types in his characterization of Dido, whose love for Aeneas seems to signify her unchanging love for her deceased husband.

One of the distinctions between Virgil’s and Marlowe’s representations of Dido is their treatment of the widow’s memory of her deceased husband. In the Aeneid, Dido’s widowhood is stressed from the beginning, when Venus-in-disguise explains to her son Aeneas how Dido came to Carthage. After her husband Sychaeus was murdered by her brother Pygmalion, ‘the true form of her unburied husband / Came in a dream’ of Dido, and urged her to ‘take flight’ from her murderous brother (I.482-83).

Dido departed her homeland immediately, and established a new kingdom in Carthage. The memory of her husband lingers persistently in Dido’s mind. 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’, which bind her to her deceased husband:

\begin{quote}
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)
\end{quote}

\footnote{All quotations are from Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (London: Campbell, 1992).}
Like the widows in *Tamburlaine*, Virgil’s Dido kills herself out of 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), and stabs herself on a funeral pyre. Dido’s desire seems to have been fulfilled. When Aeneas descends to the Underworld, he sees ‘[i]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).

While Virgil’s Dido is haunted by the memory of her husband, Marlowe’s Dido seems hardly concerned about him. Unlike Virgil’s Dido, who ‘has made a vow to her late husband that she will never remarry’, Marlowe’s Dido ‘has made no such vows’ and receives many suitors. It is ironic that Dido disguises her love for Aeneas and stresses her invincibility to love by showing ‘the pictures of my suiters’ (III.i.139), many of whose faces are recognized by Aeneas and his comrades:

- **Illioneus.** This man and I were at *Olympus* games.
- **Sergestus.** I know this face, he is a Persian borne,
  I traveld with him to *Aetolia*.
- **Cloanthus.** And I in *Athens* with this gentleman,
  Unlesse I be deceiv’d disputed once. (III.i.143-47)

Although Dido claims that her refusal of all princely suitors proves her invincible chastity, her enjoyment of many suitors from different regions rather implies her promiscuity and dangerous sexual attraction. The fact that many of these suitors are acquaintances of Aeneas and his comrades gives us an impression that nobody is free from Dido’s enchantment, including the audience. Here, Marlowe might have used the same dramaturgy as later used by Middleton and Dekker in *The Roaring Girl* (1611), in which family portraits in Sir Alexander’s gallery are represented by the faces of the audience (ii.14-29). If so, the implication is that all members of the audience, whose faces represent the portraits of the suitors to Dido, are already ensnared by the widow’s attraction. The fact that Dido cherishes her suitors’ pictures

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rather than her husband’s might also have made her loyalty to him questionable, considering that widows often keep their husbands’ pictures in early modern plays. In Middleton’s *The Puritan* (1606-7), Lady Plus laments over her husband’s death while looking at the ‘[d]ear copy of my husband’ (I.i.112). In Shirley’s *The Cardinal* (1641), the widowed Duchess refers to ‘the picture of my lord abed’ (V.iii.51).

Dido’s loyalty to her husband becomes even more questionable when she mentions his name. Since Marlowe omits Venus’s explanation about how Dido has come to Carthage, Sychaeus’s name is first mentioned by Dido at her encounter with Aeneas. Looking at Aeneas, who has just arrived at the shore of Carthage after surviving shipwreck, Dido speaks: ‘Warlike Aeneas, and in these base robes? / Goe fetch the garment which Sicheus ware’ (II.i.79-80). As Stephanie Chamberlain notes, it is puzzling that Dido ‘chooses to clothe an essential stranger in what should have been a sacred vestige of her late husband’. She argues:

> Either she values this newcomer as she did her spouse, or she holds the latter in so little esteem that she easily parts with that which is sacred. In any case, Dido’s spousal loyalty is severely compromised.\(^70\)

As several critics maintain, it is plausible that Dido’s action reveals her ‘immediate and strong attraction to the Trojan even before Cupid has intervened’\(^71\). Even if we understand Dido’s gift to Aeneas as a form of xenia or gracious hospitality to strangers, it is still striking that she bestows her husband’s memento to him. On the other hand, the fact that Dido ‘values’ Aeneas as much as her husband does not necessarily conclude that Dido is a faithless widow. It is interesting that Dido not only gives Aeneas her husband’s garment, but also encourages him to sit on her throne, and willingly accedes to the role of the mother of his son, Ascanius:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Ascanius.} & \quad \text{Madame, you shall be my mother.} \\
\text{Dido.} & \quad \text{And so I will sweete child[.] (II.i.96-97)}
\end{align*}\]

\(^70\) Chamberlain, ‘Social Conformity’, p. 169.
As Lisa Hopkins maintains, Marlowe’s Dido ‘is presented throughout the play as poignantly childless, anxious to mother’. In both *Dido* and the *Aeneid*, the maternal role is something Dido fails to obtain and perform in the marriage to Sychaeus. Here, Dido tries to assume this role by staging a tableau of herself as a mother with her son and her husband on the throne. The tableau not only signifies Dido’s personal desire ‘to mother’, but also reveals her concern for dynastic succession as a childless, widowed queen. In this context, it becomes obscure what Aeneas in Sychaeus’s garments might actually represent for Dido. Does Dido, as she claims, really consider ‘Aeneas is Aeneas’ (II.i.84)?

This ambiguity in Dido’s love for Aeneas becomes even more problematic in the cave scene. After the couple exchange their vows, Dido makes another puzzling speech and action:

*Sicneus, not Aeneas be thou calde:
The King of *Carthage*, not Anchises sonne:
Hold, take these Jewels at thy Lovers hand,
These golden bracelets, and this wedding ring,
Wherewith my husband woo’d me yet a maide,
And be thou king of *Libia*, by my guift. (III.iv.59-64)

Here, Dido articulates her intention to revive her deceased husband in the figure of Aeneas. Again, Dido’s replacement of Sychaeus with Aeneas and her surrender of the gift from Sychaeus to Aeneas can be taken as indications of her infidelity. At the same time, however, the fact that Dido uses ‘the remnants from her past life’ to transform ‘Aeneas into reincarnation of her husband’ indicates her attachment to the past and complicates such reading. For Bensel-Meyers, Dido’s attempt to revive Sychaeus in the figure of Aeneas reflects her admirable sense of responsibility as a sovereign. While trying to fulfil her sexual desire for Aeneas, Dido also endeavours to accomplish her duty as a queen by symbolically resurrecting ‘her husband, the King of

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Carthage’. However, Dido’s action cannot be fully explained from her sovereign duty, because she has already revealed her indifference to her country at this point, claiming that she would ‘emptie [her] treasurie’ (III.i.126) to keep Aeneas. Dido’s attempt to reincarnate Sychaeus in Aeneas, then, must be explained from more irrational, but strong desires to revive her deceased husband. Although Bensel-Meyers repeatedly calls Sychaeus the former king of Carthage, this is not correct because Dido has established her kingdom only after his death. Here, Dido may be trying to crown the deceased Sychaeus by making Aeneas her king, as she has tried to obtain the maternal role by imagining herself as the mother of Ascanius. If this reading is tenable, Dido’s bestowal of her husband’s garments, accessories, and even name upon Aeneas does not necessarily indicate her disloyalty to her husband, but rather reveals her strong affection and remembrance of him. Here, Marlowe raises a difficult question: if a widow loves another man for his resemblance to her deceased husband, is she chaste or lecherous?

Our response to Dido is also complicated by Marlowe’s characterization of Iarbus, whose role is expanded in Dido. Although he appears in the pre-Virgilian tradition as a tyrannical figure who pressures Dido to accept his suit by threatening the destruction of Carthage, the character ‘receives only brief mention’ in the Aeneid. There, Iarbas hears of Dido’s liaison with Aeneas only through rumour and complains of her fickleness to Jupiter, while offering him a sacrifice to take revenge. While adopting this scene from Virgil, Marlowe represents Iarbus as a much more complex character, who not only becomes a principal accuser of Dido’s infidelity, but also overlaps with her deceased husband in an intriguing way. It is notable that Dido’s oblivion of her deceased husband and fascination with Aeneas are paralleled with her loss of interest in Iarbus and dismissal of him. Iarbus’s claim to Dido’s hand is reasonable, considering that they are already sharing some of his property. He explains how he assisted Dido’s foundation of Carthage as follows:

She crav’d a hide of ground to build a towne,

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73 Bensel-Meyers, p. 112.
Iarbus’s assumption that Dido’s acceptance of his gift must guarantee her consent to marriage to him reveals that he perceives it as almost equivalent to jointure, a settlement in which the marital couple shared the ownership of property in early modern England. 75 Indeed, Dido might have even exchanged vows in a similar manner to a marriage per verba de futuro with Iarbus. Such marital vows could be dissolved without consummation,76 and this may explain why Iarbus-blames Dido as follows:

Tis not enough that thou doest graunt me love,
But that I may enjoy what I desire:
That love is childish which consists in words. (III.i.8-10)

Iarbus is indignant because Dido, while engaging in verbal and financial contracts with him, scorns ‘our royall marriage rites’ and yields ‘to a strangers bed’. In this context, Iarbus’s accusation of Dido and Aeneas as ‘adulterors’ (IV.i.20) can be taken literally, although Kehler argues that its usual meaning, ‘[a] person who commits adultery’, does not suit the circumstances of the play.77 Indeed, Aeneas compares his accidental meeting with Dido in the cave to that of ‘Mars and Venus’ (III.iv.4), an adulterous couple, whose liaison is also compared to a widow’s remarriage in the second part of Tamburlaine (see above). Interestingly, while Dido’s relationship with Aeneas is compared to adultery, it is obscure whether Dido is committing the sin against her deceased husband or Iarbus. The resemblance between these men might also have been stressed visually as Iarbus offers a sacrifice to Jupiter to take revenge on Dido. As alluded to in the Aeneid (I.475), Sychaeus was a priest

75 B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 177-78.
76 Sokol and Sokol, p. 17.
77 Dorothea Kehler, ‘Shakespeare’s Recollections of Marlowe’s Dido, Queen of Carthage: Two Notes’, ANQ, 14.1 (2001), 5-10 (pp. 7-9); ‘adulterer, n.’, OED, 1 [accessed 5 July 2016].
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of Melqart, the Phoenician equivalent of Hercules, and is considered to have been killed by Pygmalion while he was offering a sacrifice.\textsuperscript{78} Although Marlowe does not refer to Sychaeus’s priesthood, the visual image of Iarbus’s ritual might have struck some audience members who were familiar with the classical myth.

Although Marlowe’s Dido may be taken as a precursor of the early modern theatrical figure of the lusty widow, she is actually an ambiguous character whose complicated love for Aeneas blurs the boundary between the virtuous widow and the lusty widow. By suggesting that Dido’s love for Aeneas derives from her strong desire to revive her deceased husband in the figure of her new lover, Marlowe complicates the audience’s response to the widow’s sexuality and aspiration for remarriage. The question raised by Dido is explored further in Chapman’s \textit{The Widow’s Tears}, as I will discuss in Chapter Three. That Marlowe represents the widow’s deserted lover as a reincarnation of her deceased husband is also significant, because it anticipates the staging of the husband’s ghost in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean plays, which will also be discussed in the next chapter.

\textbf{B. Lusty Widows in Plays by Shakespeare and his Contemporaries}

While Marlowe represents the ‘lusty’ widow whose sexual desire for another man paradoxically signifies her virtuous widowhood and contradicts the very name, Shakespeare can be described as having laid the foundation for a stage representation of lusty widows which is more conventional than Marlowe’s. As Oakes and Kehler maintain, it is true that Shakespeare rarely employs the ‘widow hunt’ as a plot device.\textsuperscript{79} In fact, he often rewrites his sources to suppress female characters’ widowhood, especially when their sexuality appears problematic. For instance, Olivia in \textit{The Twelfth Night} (1600-2) is a rich heiress in mourning for her brother, whereas Julina, Olivia’s counterpart in the story of Apollonius and Stella, is a rich ‘widowe, whose housebande

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{The Virgil Encyclopedia}, eds. Richard F. Thomas and Jan M. Ziolkowski, vol. 3 (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 1231-32.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Oakes, pp. 137-38; Kehler, \textit{Shakespeare’s Widows}, p. 39.
\end{itemize}
was but lately deceased’.  

Although Shakespeare probably changed his source to emphasize the parallel between Viola and Olivia, both of whom are mourning for their lost brothers, his alteration suppresses the image of the lusty widow as well.

On the other hand, it is incorrect to assume that Shakespeare was ‘wary of the “lusty widow” trope’. Indeed, he developed a number of stereotypical features of the lusty widow which were continued by his contemporaries and later playwrights. In this section, I will focus on three types of lusty widows represented in early plays by Shakespeare, and discuss how these figures reappear in plays by Dekker and his collaborators, which were performed around the turn of the century. Although it remains conjectural to what extent Shakespeare might have influenced these playwrights, it is interesting that Dekker and his collaborators represented similar widow characters to Shakespeare’s after his plays were performed or published. Since many of the plays featured in this section have already been examined individually by various critics, I will concentrate on highlighting similarities and differences among these playwrights as well as the theatrical context of each play.

The first type of the lusty widow is an insubordinate remarried widow. The Widow in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1589-92) is probably the first character to be associated with the very epithet ‘a lusty widow’ (IV.ii.50) in early modern plays. However, the problem of this widow is not her sensuality but wilfulness. Before she appears on the stage, the Widow is described as a malleable woman by her suitor Hortensio and Lucentio’s servant Tranio. While Hortentio swears to marry ‘a wealthy widow / Ere three days pass’ (IV.ii.37-38), Tranio calls her ‘a lusty widow’ who ‘shall be wooed and wedded in a day’ (IV.ii.50-51). However, their expectations are betrayed, because the Widow, although she might have been conquered easily, turns

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81 For similar examples, including *Troilus and Cressida* (1601-3), see Chamberlain, ‘Social Conformity’, ch. 4; Kehler, *Shakespeare’s Widows*, pp. 74-75, 144.


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out to be a ‘practised shrew’.

Shakespeare indicates the Widow’s wilfulness by stressing her verbal facility. The Widow not only retaliates against Petruchio’s humorous remark, ‘Hortensio fears his widow’ (V.ii.16), by referring to his own shrewish wife, but also makes a perfect match against Katherina:

Widow. Your husband, being troubled with a shrew,  
Measures my husband’s sorrow by his woe:  
And now you know my meaning.  

Katherina. A very mean meaning.  

Widow. Right, I mean you. (V.ii.28-31)

Instead of fearing him, the Widow intimidates her husband and refuses to obey his order: ‘She will not come; she bids you come to her’ (V.ii.92). The Widow and Bianca are jointly called ‘froward wives’ (V.ii.119) and ‘headstrong women’ (V.ii.130), and become a foil to Katherina’s subjection to Petruchio.

A similar figure of an ungovernable widow-bride appears in Patient Grissil (1600) by Dekker, Chettle, and Haughton. Like Shrew, the play also dramatizes the taming of wives, as explained by the Marquis of Salucia, Grissil’s husband, at the denouement:

[...] married men  
That long to tame their wives must curbe them in,  
Before they need a bridle[.] (V.ii.240-42)

While the Marquis successfully obtains a submissive wife, Sir Owen, a Welsh knight, struggles to tame his new bride, Gwenthyan, a Welsh widow. Again, Gwenthyan is less sensual than wilful. She warns Sir Owen about her wilfulness before their marriage, repeating that he must allow her to ‘have her will’ (II.i.194). Sir Owen does not take this seriously, claiming that he can ‘pridle her well enoughe’ (II.i.196) and ‘tage her downe quiglie inough’

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84 Sokol and Sokol, p. 169.  
85 Kehler, Shakespeare’s Widows, p. 143.
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(II.i.206), equating the taming of his wife with his sexual dominion over her. However, Sir Owen soon realizes that ‘tis out a cry terrible hard’ to ‘tame a shrew’, which is ‘more worse then tame a mad pull’ (III.ii.174-76). While making the same contrast between the obedient wife and the untameable widow-bride as Shakespeare, Dekker and his collaborators do not represent Gwenthyan as a mere foil to Grissil’s virtue. As Sutherland and Panek maintain, Gwenthyan not only ‘relieves the unbearable tension created by Grissel’s passivity’, but also gives an acerbic comment on the Marquis’s self-righteous, tyrannical treatment of his wife by claiming that she has similarly tested her husband’s patience by pretending to be a shrew. Gwenthyan is a dramatically important character, who not only arouses the audience’s hearty laughter, but also questions the very theme of the play.

On the other hand, Dekker and his collaborators make their widow character more problematic than Shakespeare’s by conveying her wilfulness through visual images. While the Widow’s disturbing character is signified by her skilful speech in Shrew, Gwenthyan’s wilfulness is indicated by her extraordinary actions as well as her vociferousness. When Sir Owen displays a wand which he has obtained from the Marquis ‘to pang Gwenthyans podie’ whenever ‘she mag a noise and prabble’ (III.ii.178-79), Gwenthyan orders Rice, her husband’s servant, to ‘tag them and preag them in peeces’ (III.ii.184). The widow not only commands Rice to defy his master, but also threatens her husband:

Gwen. [...] what shall her doe with wands? peate Gwenthyan podie? and mag Gwenthyan put her finger in me hole: ha, by God by God, is scradge her eies out that tudge her, that tawg to her, that loog on her, marg you that Sir Owen?

Sir Ow. Yes, her marg her, Rees pray marg her Ladie?

Rice. Not I sir, shee’ll set her markes on me then.

(III.ii.192-98)

86 James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, p. 103.
87 Sutherland, pp. 52-53; Panek, pp. 57-60.
Although it is obscure whether Gwenthyan threatens Sir Owen that she will scratch his eyes by herself or that she will command Rice to do so because the subject of the verb ‘scradge’ is missing, it is the former as articulated later in Sir Owen’s complaint to the Marquis: ‘her saies shee’ll scradge out Sir O\text{w}e\text{n}s eyes’ (IV.iii.154-55). Sir Owen’s quick surrender to his wife and Rice’s fear that she might ‘set her markes on me’ – a ‘mark’ meaning ‘target’ but also possibly playing on ‘bruise’ – suggest that Gwenthyan’s formidable speech might have been accompanied by some violent actions on Sir Owen. In this context, it is interesting that Sir Owen describes himself earlier as a ‘[t]all man’ who is ‘faliant as Mars’ (II.i.187-88). If Sir Owen was acted by a tall, stout actor, his defeat by his shrewish wife must have appeared both comically and formidably. Indeed, Gwenthyan’s ungovernable nature might have given licence to a boy actor to beat an adult actor – perhaps his own master – on the public stage. Even when Sir Owen demonstrates his masculinity and physical superiority by ‘tear[ing] her ruffes and repatoes’ (III.ii.264), which Gwenthyan has ordered without her husband’s consent, the widow counters him by tearing their marriage bond, which has brought to Sir Owen ‘five thousand duckets’ (III.ii.267), and makes him cry: ‘widdows […] were petter be hang’d and quarter’ (III.ii.273-74). The extremity of Gwenthyan’s action may be highlighted when she is compared with Katherina in \textit{Shrew}. Whereas Katherina never commits violence to Petruccio after their marriage, Gwenthyan seems to do so only \textit{after} her marriage to Sir Owen. Gwenthyan’s disturbance of gender hierarchy is also visualized when she takes revenge on her husband for tearing her apparel. Instead of physical power, Gwenthyan here uses what we may call soft power by undermining her husband’s masculine reputation. When Sir Owen brings in the Marquis and other noblemen for dinner at his house, Gwenthyan appears in mean clothes like ‘a begger woman’ (IV.ii.55) and reveals that she has provided the dishes prepared for her husband’s guests to beggars. Sir Owen, who is utterly disgraced before his guests to whom he has boasted to have ‘tam’d [his] wife’ (IV.iii.132), can only promise his wife to ‘pie new repatoes and ruffes’ (IV.iii.79-80). Although the couple’s Welsh accent and Sir Owen’s self-esteem as a ‘pritish knight’ (II.i.202-03) must have made these scenes laughable, the subversive nature of Gwenthyan’s dominion over her husband cannot be underestimated.
The second type, Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* (1584-94) and the Queen Mother of Spain in *Lust’s Dominion* (1600), presumably written by Dekker, Haughton, and John Day, are lusty widows *par excellence*, although there is more emphasis upon their roles as adulterous wives, problematic mothers, or manipulative queens. They are both infatuated with Moorish lovers and associated with sensuality and moral corruption. While Tamora continues her sexual liaison with Aaron even after her remarriage and gives birth to a bastard, the Queen Mother alleges her son’s bastardy after her husband’s death, so as to marry Eleazar and make him the king. The resemblance between these women may not be coincidental. According to Cyrus Hoy, ‘[t]hat the plot of *Lust’s Dominion* imitates Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* is a commonplace’. Indeed, *Lust’s Dominion* may be based on ‘an older play, dating presumably from the early 1590s’ when the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare ‘were the rage’.88 In either case, it is likely that Dekker and his collaborators knew *Titus* when they were working on *Lust’s Dominion*.89

Nonetheless, there is one notable difference between Tamora and the Queen Mother, which is symbolically reflected in their kneeling. In *Titus*, the widow’s kneeling signifies her genuine affection for her son. When Titus commands to offer ‘[t]he eldest son of this distressèd Queen’ (I.i.106) as a sacrifice to appease the wandering souls of his dead sons, Tamora pleads with Titus:

Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed –
A mother’s tears in passion for her son –
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
Oh, think my son to be as dear to me! (I.i.108-11)

Although there is no stage direction for Tamora’s kneeling, it is evinced by her oath to make Titus ‘know what ’tis to let a queen / Kneel in the streets

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and beg for grace in vain’ (I.i.456-57). She is also depicted as kneeling before Titus in the drawing attributed to Henry Peacham, which I mentioned in Chapter One. Tamora’s kneeling not only signifies her powerlessness and forced submission to the Roman patriarch, but also denotes her strong determination to save her son. As she argues, it is an extreme disgrace for a queen to ‘[k]neel’ and ‘beg’. As Eugene M. Waith maintains, the fact that Peacham chose this particular moment for his drawing suggests that ‘her prayer was, not only verbally but visually, an arresting moment’. Indeed, Shakespeare appropriates the visual and emotional impact of widows’ kneeling in *Coriolanus* (1607-9) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613-14) as well. While Volumnia’s kneeling subverts Coriolanus’s determination to destroy Rome, the kneeling of the three widowed queens moves Hippolyta to persuade Theseus to postpone their marriage and take revenge for their murdered husbands. Although these examples appropriate the impact of widows’ kneeling in rather disturbing ways, Tamora’s kneeling might have had a similar emotional impact and aroused the audience’s sympathy to some extent.

While Tamora’s kneeling signifies her genuine care for her son, the Queen Mother’s reference to the same gesture reveals her hypocrisy. Unlike Tamora, who changes from a lamenting mother to a vengeful adulteress, the Queen Mother is condemned as ‘an extravagantly abandoned woman […] who has abandoned her roles of queen, wife, mother in her betrayal of country and family’ throughout the play. Although Sutherland considers that widowhood does not play a significant role in the characterization of the Queen Mother, Dekker and his collaborators stress her problematic character by staging the moment of her husband’s death, in which she evokes virtuous acts of kneeling and praying to conceal her wickedness. Running to her husband’s death-bed and finding him still alive, the Queen Mother claims that she was devastated by the news of his death:

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91 Hoy, vol. 4, p. 66.
92 Sutherland, p. 53.
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Whil’st I, vailing my knees to the cold earth,
Drowning my withered cheeks in my warm tears,
And stretching out my arms to pull from heaven
Health for the Royal Majestie of Spain,
All cry’d, The Majestie of Spain is dead:
That last word (dead) struck through the ecchoing air,
Rebounded on my heart, and smote me down
Breathlesse to the cold earth[.] (I.ii.4-11)

Her description of the histrionic gestures of praying and mourning is apparently false. Earlier in the scene, she appears with Eleazar to whom she confesses: ‘My husband King upon his death-bed lies, / Yet have I stolne from him to look on thee’ (I.i.99-100). The Queen Mother’s hypocrisy is contrasted with the genuine grief of Isabella, her virtuous daughter, who is ‘confounded in her tears’ at her father’s ‘beds-feet’ (I.ii.22). When King Philip consoles his beloved daughter whom he describes as bearing ‘the heaviest burthen’ (I.ii.23) of his death, the Queen Mother protests:

Oh say rather
I bear, and am born down, my sorrowing
Is for a husbands losse, losse of a King. (I.ii.25-27)

Although the Queen Mother laments more overtly than Isabella, who sheds her tears quietly without utterance, her exaggerated lamentation rather betrays her hypocrisy, and is dismissed by King Philip: ‘No more’ (I.ii.28). This adulterous wife, who is condemned by her son for making the king’s bed-chamber ‘a Brothelry’ (I.ii.118), clearly desires her husband’s death. She even seems to ‘kill’ her husband by lamenting over his death precipitately. After King Philip finishes his last speech and starts taking leave of this world, the Cardinal warns everyone: ‘As yet his soul’s not from her temple gone, /
Therefore forbear loud lamentation’ (I.ii.78-79). However, the Queen Mother ignores his admonition and exclaims: ‘Oh he is dead, hee’s dead! lament and die, / In her King’s end begins Spains misery’ (I.ii.80-81). The Queen Mother’s speech is ironic, not only because her husband is not completely gone yet, but also because it is she who causes ‘Spains misery’ by contriving
to make her Moorish lover the king. The Queen Mother’s false lamentation not only stresses her hypocrisy, but also reveals how lamentation or mourning gestures can be appropriated by widows to pretend their virtue. Along with Elizabeth’s vehement mourning in Richard III, the Queen Mother’s pretence of sorrow highlights the theatricality of widows’ lamentations, which I will explore further in Chapter Three.

Lastly, both Shakespeare and Dekker represent comic lusty widows in Henry IV, Part 2 (1596-1600) and Satiromastix (1601). As James maintains, Satiromastix ‘presents one of the fullest early uses of the widow-hunt’ in its subplot, which involves the courtship of a wealthy, old, citizen widow by three mercenary gentlemen, and her subsequent marriage to a robust ‘man of war’ (III.i.213), whose only merits are wit and sexual attractiveness. While Captain Tucca’s winning of Mistress Miniver anticipates Jacobean ‘lusty widow’ plays in which wealthy widows are often conquered by military men, it is notable that Shakespeare precedes Dekker in representing a similar relationship between Mistress Quickly and Falstaff. Indeed, Mistress Quickly and Mistress Miniver share many characteristics of widows which appear repeatedly in later plays: bawdiness, ambition to become a lady through marriage to a knight or gentleman, and infatuation with a penniless, loveless man with sexual potency. On the other hand, Shakespeare’s and Dekker’s comic widows are different in one crucial way. While Mistress Quickly is an impoverished widow who makes her living by continuing a tavern left by her deceased husband, Mistress Miniver is a tremendously rich widow who can live in luxury and buy everything she desires. As I will discuss, this distinction is reflected in the widows’ relationships to their property, and eventually determines the power hierarchy between the widows and their suitors.

Although Mistress Quickly is ‘a kind of “entrepreneur”’ who has her own business and property, her independence only makes her ‘a poor widow of Eastcheap’ (II.i.59) instead of emancipating her. As she complains to the

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93 James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, pp. 103-04.
Lord Chief Justice, she is impoverished by Falstaff’s failure to repay his debts:

A hundred mark is a long one for a poor lone woman to beare, and I have borne, and borne, and borne, and have been fubbed off, and fubbed off, and fubbed off, from this day to that day, that it is a shame to be thought on. (II.i.25-29)

Although Mistress Quickly is undoubtedly serious and desperate in her suit, her risqué words (‘a long one’ and ‘bear’) and somewhat erotic sounds of repetitive verbs insinuate the sexual relationship between the widow and the parasite. A similar obscene image emerges as she continues to describe how Falstaff ‘hath eaten me out of house and home’ and ‘put all my substance into that fat belly of his’ (II.i.62-63). This imagery of eating is appropriate not only because Falstaff might have sexually tasted the widow, but also because he literally feeds himself by exploiting her fortune. Even during her suit to the Justice, Falstaff urges the widow to pawn her household items and raise money for his sake:

*Hostess.* By this heavenly ground I tread on, I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining chambers.

*Falstaff.* Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking, and for thy walls a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the prodigal, or the German hunting in waterwork is worth a thousand of these bed-hangers and these fly-bitten tapestries. Let it be ten pound, if thou canst. (II.i.123-29)

Their exchange interestingly gives us an inventory of household/business items in Mistress Quickly’s tavern. Although it is unclear whether plates and glasses were actually presented on the early modern stage, ‘these bed-hangers, and these fly-bitten tapestries’ are most likely to have been hung in the discovery space, possibly signifying the widow’s poverty through their poor quality. Falstaff’s reference to ‘the story of the prodigal’ is also noteworthy, because the ‘lusty widow’ trope is often described as a variation of the biblical
story of the Prodigal Son by modern critics. While the Prodigal Son is saved by his benevolent father, the young spendthrift suitor is redeemed by the wealthy, sensual widow. Indeed, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, the hangings or paintings representing the story are repeatedly associated with widows’ households in Caroline plays.

It is notable that Mistress Quickly’s over-expense for the sake of Falstaff is driven by her assumption that he would soon become her husband. When Falstaff asks, ‘What is the gross sum that I owe thee?’ (II.i.72), Mistress Quickly replies: ‘Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too’ (II.i.73-74). Although Mistress Quickly’s description of Falstaff as her own property anticipates Mistress Miniver’s materialistic language which reduces her suitors to commodities, Mistress Quickly is subordinated to Falstaff because he keeps deferring to give her ‘the commodity’ which he has promised her to give. According to Mistress Quickly, Falstaff asked her to ‘fetch […] thirty shillings’ (II.i.89) when he promised her marriage for the first time. However, the fact that Falstaff keeps deferring their marriage compels Mistress Quickly to give more money to him. While the price of Falstaff increases – he has already seized ‘[a] hundred mark’ from the widow and now demands ‘ten pound’ – Mistress Quickly is reduced to nothing as she pawns her plate, glasses, hangings, or ‘gown’ (II.i.138).

Although Oakes argues that Falstaff’s ‘unscrupulous exploitation’ of the poor widow should have elicited the early modern audience’s negative response to him, such a moral judgement does not fit with ‘the controlling context of tone and manner’ of this comical exchange, as A. R. Humphrey maintains. While the comical tone of the exchange between the widow and the prodigal follows the pattern of the ‘lusty widow’ trope, it is notable that Shakespeare does not explain Mistress Quickly’s insistence on marrying Falstaff from her sensuality. Although her sexual relationship with Falstaff is clearly evoked as she explains how ‘he stabbed me in mine own house, most beastly’ (II.i.11-12), it is Falstaff’s entertaining and charming character which seems to fascinate the good-hearted widow and drives her to prodigality.

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95 James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, pp. 157-75; Panek, pp. 55-56.
The full embodiment of the comic lusty widow appears in *Satiromastix*, Dekker’s last contribution to the so-called War of the Theatres. Although, as Roslyn Lander Knutson persuasively argues, there is an important thematic parallel between the main and sub plots, I will concentrate for the purpose of my discussion on the sub plot which features the motif of the widow hunt.  

As already mentioned, the importance of Dekker’s representation of Mistress Miniver as a precursor of the Jacobean and Caroline appropriation of the ‘lusty widow’ trope has been noted by James. Indeed, it is significant that *Satiromastix* was acted by both the King’s Men and the Children of St. Paul’s in their outdoor and indoor playhouses respectively. Along with the fact that it was the last piece for the War of Theatres, this unique performance arrangement suggests that the play was probably seen by a larger number of spectators than usual. It is likely that Dekker’s representation of Mistress Miniver in *Satiromastix* played a significant role in disseminating the image of the lusty widow to the early modern audience. The performance of the play by the Children of St. Paul’s also anticipates early Jacobean satirical plays about widows in a symbolic way, because most of these plays were acted by the children’s companies in their indoor theatres. As James argues, in *Satiromastix*, Captain Tucca is represented as a victorious figure who not only annihilates Horace, a caricature of Ben Jonson, but also wins ‘his match with the widow, the prize for which so many have so arduously contended’. While continuing James’s discussion, I will demonstrate that Mistress Miniver is not represented as a mere ‘prize’ to be pursued by men, but as an active player in the commercialized marriage market of the play.

In stark contrast to Mistress Quickly, who is almost reduced to nothing by her extravagant lover, Mistress Miniver is a wealthy widow surrounded by many commodities. As discussed in Chapter One, the widow’s name itself comes from a kind of fur used as a lining for ceremonial costume in the

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98 On this unique arrangement, see Knutson, ch. 6; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 140-44.

99 James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, p. 108.
medieval and early modern period. Indeed, Mistress Miniver might have worn this material on the early modern stage, considering that her suitors swear ‘by this Miniver cappe’ (II.i.129) or call her ‘my reverend Ladie Lettice-cap’ (III.i.196). Although miniver was cheaper than lettuce, these terms refer to the same type of ‘[a]n outdoor bonnet covering the ears’ and ‘triangular-shaped’. She might also have had a ‘white […] kercher’ (IV.i.182), another object discussed in Chapter One. It is almost certain that Mistress Miniver appeared in an extravagant costume which was more appropriate for an aristocratic lady than a citizen widow. The widow boasts of having ‘all implements, belonging to the vocation of a Lady’ (II.i.12-13), including ‘my Coach, and my fan, and a man or two that serve my turne’ (II.i.16-17), although ‘God never gave me the grace to be a Lady’ (II.i.10). She also ‘ha some thinges that were fetcht […] as farre as some of the Low Countries’ and ‘payde sweetly for them’ because she was told ‘they were good for Ladies’ (II.i.22-24). However, Mistress Miniver knows that it is not enough to acquire these commodities to become a lady, and aims at an advantageous marriage to a knight.

It is noteworthy that Mistress Miniver mentions ‘a man or two that serve my turn’ along with her coach and fan. Her reference to these male servants not only emphasizes her sensuality, which has already been suggested by Sir Quintilian’s order to his servant: ‘a chayre with a stronge backe, and a soft bellie, great with childe, with a cushion for this reverend Lady’ (II.i.8-9). It also reveals that the widow perceives these men, whose sexual service is implied, as commodities which could be bought like her coach and fan. Although it is not extraordinary for a mistress to describe her servants as property, this juxtaposition of men and commodities is telling, because Mistress Miniver indeed has wealth and freedom to buy such men for sexual pleasure. A similar image of men as commodities appears in the exchange between the widow and her three suitors, Sir Quintilian Shorthose, Sir Adam Prickshaft, and Sir Vaughan ap Rees. Sir Vaughan, a Welsh knight, speaks to the widow:

100 Cumming et al., p. 121.
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Sir Vaugh. [...] heere is sir Kintilian Sorthose, and heere is sir Adam Prickshaft [...] and heere is sir Vaughan ap Rees [...] we all three love you, at the bottome of our bellyes, and our hearts: and therefore mistris Minever, if you please, you shall be knighted by one of us, whom you sall desire to put into your device and minde.

Min. One I must have sir Vaughan. (II.i.29-37)

Standing next to each other before the widow and waiting to be picked by her, these suitors appear almost like goods in a shop. With her great wealth, Mistress Miniver can ‘buy’ any of these mercenary suitors and the title of a lady. That Mistress Miniver has an upper hand over her suitors is also evinced by the fact that she is offered many gifts as love tokens, including a ‘chaine’ (III.i.120) and ‘a purse of golde’ (III.i.152), which makes a contrast with Mistress Quickly’s offering of money to Falstaff.¹⁰¹

These verbal and material exchanges between the widow and her suitors reveal a pragmatic, economic tone permeating the subplot of Satiromastix. While Mistress Miniver wants a gentleman who can make her a lady, her suitors want to acquire her great wealth. Here, marriage appears as an unromantic, monetary arrangement, which makes a clear contrast with the true spousal love between Sir Terill and Celestina in the main plot. Indeed, it is notable that Mistress Miniver shows almost no interest in her suitors’ claims of sincere love. For instance, her refusal to receive a love sonnet from Sir Vaughan seems to reveal not only her indifference to poetry, but also her scepticism towards discourse of love. However, the fact that the widow’s sole purpose of remarriage is to become a lady makes her choice of a husband almost impossible. Since all three suitors equally claim to love her from ‘the bottome of our bellyes, and our hearts’, and are equally capable of making her a lady, Mistress Miniver cannot pick one, although she knows that she ‘must have’ only one. This stalemate may partly explain why the widow suddenly speaks of her renunciation of remarriage – ‘I was upon a time in the way to marriage, but now I am turn’d a tother side, I ha sworne to leade a single and simple life’ (III.i.72-73) – while her suitors try to differentiate

¹⁰¹ James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, p. 106.
themselves from others by preparing a gift or asking Captain Tucca to woo the widow on their behalf.

However, Mistress Miniver is soon ‘turn’d a tother side’ again by Captain Tucca’s extraordinary courtship. Unlike her gentleman suitors who disguise their mercenary purpose by claiming to ‘love’ the widow, Captain Tucca calls Mistress Miniver by many ‘horrible ungodlie names’ (III.i.189) and articulates his monetary interest: ‘thou shalt bee my West Indyes, and none but trim Tucca shall discover thee’ (III.i.165-66). Captain Tucca’s calling of the widow ‘West Indyes’ is revealing, not only because it is sexually suggestive, but also because it exemplifies how Captain Tucca reduces the widow into an object by variously calling her ‘a bottle of ale’ (III.i.109), ‘Oyster-pye’ (III.i.105), or ‘my wide mouth at Bishops-gate’ (III.i.178), the last of which refers to the sign of a tavern.102 These vulgar associations stress Mistress Miniver’s citizen background and reveal that she is no better than Captain Tucca in a ‘poor greasie buffe Jerkin’ (I.ii.133-34), however much she dresses like a lady. On the other hand, Captain Tucca also reduces himself into an object by describing himself as a male body which can provide sexual services to the widow: ‘Ile carrie my naked sword before thee’ (III.i.195-96); ‘I meane to bee thy needle’ (III.i.200). By defining himself in purely physical, sexual terms, Captain Tucca demonstrates that there is another commodity – a sexually attractive male body – which the widow can buy with her wealth instead of ladyship. This offer makes Captain Tucca an outstanding figure among the mundane suitors, and enables him to win the widow.

Although this exchange between money and sexual pleasure is a common motif in plays appropriating the ‘lusty widow’ trope, Mistress Miniver’s choice of Captain Tucca is an adventurous one, considering that her gentlemen suitors could furnish her with ladyship without failure, while Captain Tucca’s promise to make her a lady is purely a matter of luck: ‘when the next action is layde upon me, thou shalt be Ladified’ (III.i.217-18). Nonetheless, the widow chooses to invest her money in Captain Tucca’s military prowess and sexual potency, both of which are yet to be proven,

instead of simply buying a gentleman and the title of a lady. By taking this risk, Mistress Miniver tests not only her new husband’s ability to meet his promise, but also her own judgement and ability to estimate the intrinsic value of this ‘commodity’. In this context, the widow emerges not simply as a ‘prize’ to be won by her witty, robust suitor, but as an investor who plays an active role in the commercialized marriage market.

In this chapter, I discussed the emergence and development of the two basic types of widows, the lamenting widow and the lusty widow, in Elizabethan drama. After discussing how widows’ lamentations elicited ambivalent reactions, namely praise and sympathy or censure and suspicion, in the early modern period by using non-dramatic sources, I examined the representations of lamenting widows in Tamburlaine and Richard III. While associating widows’ vehement lamentations with their genuine grief, Marlowe and Shakespeare do not represent these women as mere objects of pity. Rather, widows are portrayed as problematic characters whose violent deaths and histrionic gestures not only disturb the audience, but also insinuate the theatricality of widows’ lamentations. Indeed, these playwrights also highlight the fluidity between the antithetical types of widows in their representations of lusty widows. While Marlowe raises a complex issue about widows’ sexuality and remarriage by associating Dido’s love for Aeneas with her desire to revive her deceased husband, Shakespeare created the three character types of lusty widows, whose problematic action, gesture, and economic power were expanded by Dekker and his collaborators. These playwrights’ ambiguous attitudes toward widows, including their recognition that widows’ lamentations and virtue are performative, are continued by early seventeenth-century playwrights, notably Chapman and Middleton, whose satirical representations of widows will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Three

From Elizabethan Tragedy to Early Jacobean Satirical Comedy: Chapman’s and Middleton’s Challenges to Elizabethan Conventions

As I discussed in the Introduction, modern critics have long recognized that the theatrical appropriation of the ‘lusty widow’ trope flourished in the Jacobean era. While minor playwrights, as exemplified by Barry’s *Ram Alley* (1607-8), appropriate this trope almost uncritically, more celebrated writers question its assumptions about widows’ sexuality and remarriage, continuing earlier playwrights’ interest in the fluidity between the types of the lamenting widow and the lusty widow. As James explains, the Jacobean representation of widows is characterized by ‘two distinct modes, either the satiric or the romantic’, each of which was popular in the first and second decade of the seventeenth century respectively. ¹ Although these period divisions are not as clear cut as James asserts, it is useful to consider them separately while mentioning their overlaps. In this chapter and the next, I call these distinctive modes or phases ‘the period of satire’ and ‘the period of romance’, and consider their characteristics.

This chapter focuses on ‘the period of satire’, in which Chapman’s and Middleton’s plays about widows were acted by the children’s companies in their indoor playhouses in the 1600s. Although James and Panek have discussed Chapman’s and Middleton’s satirical representations of widows in individual plays extensively, they have not highlighted how these playwrights challenge Elizabethan conventions, notably the staging of the husband’s ghost. ² In this chapter, I will first position the figure of the husband’s ghost within the socio-historical context of the time by examining non-dramatic texts. Second, I will demonstrate how widows are driven to self-condemnation for their new love or remarriage by encountering the ghostly figures of their deceased husbands in Elizabethan tragedies. Lastly, I will consider how Chapman and Middleton challenge the Elizabethan convention

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¹ James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, p. 238.
² James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, pp. 113-34; Panek, ch. 5.
by replacing the 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* (1603-5) and *Michaelmas Term* (1604-7). Like most of the early Jacobean plays acted by the children’s companies, Chapman’s and Middleton’s plays are essentially satirical. Indeed, plays of the 1600s often express sceptical views of widows’ lamentations, and early Jacobean playwrights were especially vocal about their suspicion, representing widows’ mourning gestures and lamentations as almost invariably hypocritical and untrustworthy. Notwithstanding, Chapman’s and Middleton’s satire is less directed against widows than jealous husbands, whose irrational desire to control their wives’ sexuality even after their own deaths is derided and problematized.

1. Abridgement of Mourning and the Emergence of Ghosts in Early Modern Drama

Many literary critics have pointed out that the figure of the ghost appears frequently in early modern literature, including drama, especially after the 1580s, and have explained this phenomenon from the traumatic experience of the abridgement of mourning after the Reformation. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Protestant denial of the Catholic doctrine of purgatory radically changed mourning practices in early modern England. Before the Reformation, ‘people generally believed that the soul went first to purgatory’, an 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’.3 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.4 On the other

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3 Cressy, p. 386.
hand, the torments in purgatory were imagined as so dreadful that people tried to mitigate their post-mortem sufferings by various means. Alongside ‘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. It was therefore a major concern of dying people to ensure that they would obtain sufficient prayers of the living in and after their funerals. Praying for the dead was also considered as beneficial for the living, because it enabled them to retain some sense of connection with the deceased and overcome their losses gradually. It was also understood as in itself a virtuous act, helping those who prayed to earn their own place in heaven too.

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. 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 intercessory effort was dismissed as meaningless. 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. 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

5 Cressy, p. 386.
6 Gittings, pp. 32-33; Marshall, pp. 18-25.
8 Marshall, p. 11.
10 Cressy, p. 386.
11 Schwyzer, pp. 99-100; Marshall, pp. 94-95; Woodward, p. 42.
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.\textsuperscript{12} The tenor of the 1552 Prayer Book remained almost unchanged up to the Civil War.\textsuperscript{13} 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’.\textsuperscript{14} According to Clare Gittings,

\begin{quote}
[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 mind, year-day or obit. These services […] could continue for many years or even, at least in theory, in perpetuity.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

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’.\textsuperscript{16} Alongside these personal arrangements, there were 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.\textsuperscript{17} The Offertory in Solemn Mass on Sundays was also ‘preceded by the bidding of the bedes which involved praying for the parish dead’.\textsuperscript{18} It is then unsurprising that many people found the reformed funeral services and rituals of commemoration inadequate and hung onto traditional practices even after they were illegalized. According to Cressy, ‘the traditional month-mind and


\textsuperscript{14} Marshall, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{15} Gittings, p. 31; Woodward, pp. 41-42; Marshall, pp. 18-21.

\textsuperscript{16} Gittings, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{17} Marshall, pp. 14-15.

\textsuperscript{18} Woodward, pp. 41-42.
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’. 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. 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’. It also reflects the ambiguous position of prayers for the dead in early modern theological discourse. 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. 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.

Indeed, it is often argued that the abridgement of mourning made the living even more haunted by the memory of the dead by placing them beyond the reach of their survivors and raising the question of how to mourn the dead properly. Many early modern writers tried to cope with or reflect upon this traumatic experience by using the figure of the ghost. Although ghosts

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19 Cressy, pp. 398-400; Gittings, pp. 43-46; Schwyzzer, p. 102.
21 Woodward, p. 60.
22 Wooding, pp. 26-27.
23 Gittings, pp. 50-53; Marshall, pp. 4-5.

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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. Before the Reformation, people generally 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. 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’. 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. 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’. Regarding 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 revenger as mourner. Although these critics give us great insight into the representation of the ghost and the issues of remembrance in early modern drama, they almost exclusively focus on the relationship between father and son, the murdered

26 Duffy, pp. 349-51; Marshall, pp. 15-17.
27 Marshall, pp. 234-35.
29 Schwyzer, p. 117; Greenblatt, Hamlet in Purgatory, pp. 248-49.
30 Huston Diehl, Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), ch. 4; Rist; Neill, ch. 7; Greenblatt, Hamlet in Purgatory, ch. 4-5.
and the revenger, and do not consider the mourning – or lack of mourning – by women.\textsuperscript{31} My aim is to raise the question of gender by focusing on the relationship between widows and their deceased husbands. Before discussing plays, however, it is helpful to look at how widows and their deceased husbands appear in non-dramatic texts.

2. Widows’ Memory and Husbands’ Ghosts in Non-Dramatic Texts

Like other ghosts, the husband’s ghost was never fully expunged from post-Reformation literature. 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.\textsuperscript{32} 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 is not simply a piece of Catholic propaganda to propagate 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 love for her deceased husband by asking the prior to pray ‘[f]or his soul, that noble man’, the ghost answers the prior’s question why he has visited his widow instead of religious men, whose prayers were more effective, as follows:

\begin{quote}
I loved more my wife
than any other man alive,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{31} 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 (ch. 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.

\textsuperscript{32} Qtd. in Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p. 106.
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And therefore first to her I went.33

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.34 However frightening, the emergence of the husband’s ghost indicates the ongoing relationship between the widow and her deceased husband and their unchanged mutual affections.

Although he does not use the term ‘ghost’, Juan Luis Vives presents a similar idea in The Education of a Christian Woman (1524). In the chapter ‘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 mitigate 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.35

Like The Gast of Gy, Vives highlights the ongoing relationship between the widow and her deceased husband, and his purpose in evoking this relationship 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

33 Qtd. in Greenblatt, Hamlet in Purgatory, pp. 110, 130.
35 Vives, p. 309.
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the body; but now relieved of this burden, a free and pure spirit, he will become the guardian of her conscience as well.\textsuperscript{36}

Vives’s discussion interestingly reveals the paradoxical relationship between the widow and her deceased husband. On one hand, the widow’s memory of her husband can be oppressive for her, because it continues to keep the widow under the control of her deceased 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 of her husband enables her to disturb their gender hierarchy, because the deceased husband can only ‘exist’ while he is remembered by his widow. As Vives implies in his admonition to widows to remember their husbands: ‘They have completely died when they have been consigned to death, that is, oblivion’.\textsuperscript{37}

Whereas pre-Reformation literature takes 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 already discussed in Chapter Two, Angel Day gives an example of a consolatory letter to a widow in his manual for epistle writing, \textit{The English Secretarie} (1586), in which he admonishes the widow 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 [sic] after the ghosts of our deceased frends?’\textsuperscript{38} Still, Day does not abandon the idea of the husband’s ghost completely. While expounding the Christian idea of death as a progress 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 […] you might in apperance heere him, in these like speeches accusing & rebuking such your distemperate actions […] what meane you by teares to serche out for a thing so

\textsuperscript{36} Vives, p. 310.
\textsuperscript{37} Vives, p. 309.
\textsuperscript{38} Day, p. 213.
irrecuperable? why torment you your youthfull yeares, with such unprofitable, or rather as I may cal it, desperate kind of mourninges?\textsuperscript{39}

While carefully representing the figure as fictional, Day uses the husband’s ghost for a didactic purpose like Vives, although their morals are completely opposite. 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 deceased husband: ‘Alas, how fruitles is this love, and zealous remembrance’.\textsuperscript{40} As already mentioned in the Introduction, it is often argued 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 toward fruitful remarriage. Whereas the deceased husband in Vives’s work demands his widow to remember him and continue to live chastely as his wife, the same figure in Day’s work encourages his widow to stop lamentation, forget him or at 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 observable in the mid-1610s. In his addition to the sixth edition of Sir Thomas Overbury’s \textit{Characters} (1615), Webster praises the widow’s chastity and renunciation of remarriage as follows: ‘Her maine superstition is, shee thinkes her husbands ghost would walke should shee not performe his Will’ (ll. 9-10).\textsuperscript{41} While carefully rejecting the existence of ghosts by calling it 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 deceased husband. Although

\textsuperscript{39} Day, pp. 215-16.
\textsuperscript{40} Day, p. 213.
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, it is notable that 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 famous heroine objects in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14) – ‘Why should only I / […] / Be cased 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.

In the next section, I will discuss how this paradoxical relationship between the widow and the deceased husband plays a significant role in Elizabethan tragedies, especially in *Hamlet*.

3. Widows’ Memory and Husbands’ Ghosts in Elizabethan Tragedies

Before the figure of the husband’s ghost appeared on the stage in Marston’s *Antonio’s Revenge* (1600-1) and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1600-2), there were at least three plays which dramatized the murder of the husband and his widow’s new love or remarriage. While *Arden of Faversham* (1587-92) and *A Warning for Fair Women* (1595-99), both anonymous, are domestic tragedies based on true accounts of an adulterous wife’s murder of her husband with her lover, George Peele’s *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe* (1584-94) 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!
As Ariane M. Balizet suggests, the anonymous author makes much ‘of the two women’s attempts to wash away the blood’. This becomes more apparent when we compare the scene with Raphael Holinshed’s rather unemotional 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’. Alice clearly perceives her husband’s blood as 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 A Warning, the murdered husband reappears as a bloody handkerchief which has been sent to Anne from her murderous lover. 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:

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 Two, 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 A Warning, Anne is not only ‘the causer’ but also an accomplice in Browne’s murder of her husband, and her gestures appear more clearly as self-

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43 Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland (1587), repr. in Anon., Arden of Faversham, ed. White, Appendix, pp. 113-23 (p. 119).
44 Balizet, pp. 78-80.
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, the sickness of her child with David makes Bethsabe reflect upon
her murdered husband:

Urias, woe is me to thinke hereon,
For who is it among the sonnes of men,
That sayth not to my soule, the King hath sind,
David hath done amisse, and Bersabe
Laid snares of death unto Urias life. (v.612-16)\textsuperscript{45}

Bethsabe clearly perceives her child’s sickness as punishment for her betrayal
of her husband. Despite the fact that Bethsabe initially resists David’s demand
and concedes to it only in fear of incurring the king’s wrath, she is perceived
as a murderous adulteress and her child is termed ‘[h]is mothers sin, his kingly
fathers scorne’ (vi.693).

In these plays, the murdered husband is evoked by some object or
incident, and his ‘uncanny’ presence triggers the widow’s self-accusation for
her infidelity. Here I use the term self-consciously to recall Sigmund Freud’s
essay ‘The “Uncanny”’ (1919), which helps us highlight the complexity of
widows’ psychology in early modern drama. Freud explains that ‘the uncanny
is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and
long familiar’.\textsuperscript{46} 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 for new
love or remarriage. In this sense, the husband’s ghost is almost synonymous
with the widow’s conscience, although the fact that it takes a form of an
external entity makes its relationship to the widow more complicated.

\textsuperscript{45} George Peele, The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe, The Malone
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This association between the husband’s ghost and the widow’s conscience is also highlighted by the following account in Thomas Heywood’s *An Apology for Actors* (1612). When *The History of Friar Francis*, an anonymous play which 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.\(^{47}\) In the play,

>a woman, who insatiately doting on a yong gentleman, had [...] mischiefously and secretly [sic] 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.\(^{48}\)

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 skratched 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’.\(^{49}\) After this incident, the murderess was duly arrested and condemned. The incident not only demonstrates how drama can correct vice and admonish the audience to refrain from evil acts, as Heywood contends, but also shows how the stage figure of the husband’s ghost could even arouse the widow’s conscience in reality.


\(^{49}\) Heywood, sigs. G1’-G2’.
The complex relationship between widows and their deceased husbands is explored further in *Antonio’s Revenge* (1600-1) and *Hamlet* (1600-2). The similarity between these plays has long been noted by modern critics. In both plays,

> [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.\(^{50}\)

This similarity may not be coincidental, because Marston might have used the same source as Shakespeare, the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, the lost play of the 1580s.\(^{51}\) It is possible that both Shakespeare and Marston derived the figure of the husband’s ghost from this old play among others.\(^{52}\) 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 oysterwife, Hamlet, revenge’ in *Wits Miserie* (1596).\(^{53}\) The following passage in the Induction of *A 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)\(^{54}\)

A ‘pilch’ is an ‘outer garment made of animal skin with the fur used as a lining’.\(^{55}\) These accounts together tell us how the figure of the ghost might

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\(^{55}\) ‘pilch, n.’, *OED*, 1 [accessed 5 July 2016].
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have looked on the early modern stage. The fact that the ghost of the murdered king does not appear in Saxo Grammaticus’ 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.56

On the other hand, Marston’s and Shakespeare’s representations of the relationship between widows and their husbands’ ghosts 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 father? O sweet boy, / Part of him thus I clip, my dear, dear joy’ (I.iii.105-06). It is notable that Marston strengthens this favourable image of Maria by using her gestures. When her husband’s death is reported, Maria cries out and swoons:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mar.} & \quad \text{O, fatal, disastrous, cursèd, dismal!} \\
& \quad \text{Choke breath and life. I breathe, I live too long,} \\
& \quad \text{Andrugio, my lord, I come, I come.} \\
\text{Pie.} & \quad \text{Be cheerful, princess; help, Castilio,} \\
& \quad \text{The lady’s swooned; help to bear her in. (I.v.14-18)}
\end{align*}
\]

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the widow’s desire to follow her husband in death is possibly associated with sexual ecstasy by the word ‘come’ and the image of suffocation. Maria’s genuine grief for her husband’s death is also expressed through her poignant gestures in the dumb show at his funeral. Maria is supported by two men as she follows her husband’s 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 her gestures in a dumb show: ‘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 her as 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 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 accept marriage to the villain may be condemnable, Maria is never deprived of the audience’s sympathy.

Whereas the ghost in *Hamlet* appears as an uninvited guest who stalks on the battlement at midnight without being invoked, the emergence of the ghost of Andrugio is strongly related to his survivors’ remembrance of him. His first appearance is provoked 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 might 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.\(^{57}\) When Antonio talks to his deceased father and grieves 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:

\(^{57}\) Rist, pp. 76-81.
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 notable that the ghost of Andrugio has no doubt that his widow is able to see him and listen to his injunction against 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 toward 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 cancelèd? (III.v.1-4)

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;
As Bensel-Meyers argues, Maria’s assistance in Antonio’s revenge makes her a dynamic character, who changes from a virtuous wife, lamenting widow, victim of the corrupting power, to Nemesis. On the other hand, Maria’s involvement in her son’s revenge does not necessarily indicate her agency. Maria surely appears as a disruptive figure when she subtly evades Piero’s crucial 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 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 deceased husband. On the other hand, it reveals her as a passive figure simply following the order of her husband, who symbolically appears on the stage balcony ‘betwixt the music houses’ (V.ii.17 s.d.) and looks down at the main stage as the author and ‘spectator of revenge’ (V.ii.22). This high placing of Andrugio’s ghost is significant, considering that ghosts in other Elizabethan tragedies, including *The Spanish Tragedy* (1585-91), *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 has omnipotence and absolute power over the fates of other characters, including his widow. Before Antonio’s closing lines, Maria speaks:

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59 Bensel-Meyers, pp. 128-29.
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[...] 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[.] (V.v.48-52)

While Maria’s remembrance of her husband and involvement in the revenge for his death unmistakeably make her a virtuous widow, she cannot define herself in any new way but will continue to live as ‘the widow of the poisoned lord’.

In Hamlet, Shakespeare takes a step further than Marston in his representation of the relationship between the widow and her deceased husband. As I will discuss, although Gertrude’s remarriage is roundly condemned by the ghost of old Hamlet, her oblivion of her husband disrupts their gender hierarchy by revealing that the deceased 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 of her status in 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. By refusing to stage these events, Shakespeare clearly represents the death of old Hamlet as 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)

As Greenblatt notes, Claudius ‘usurps [...] 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

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60 Whipday, p. 124; Bensel-Meyers, p. 144.
61 All quotations are from ‘the combined text’, based on the Second Quarto with interpolated lines, scenes, and passages from the First Folio, in The Norton Shakespeare.

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admonishes her son against prolonged lamentation. While indicating her as a good Protestant, Gertrude’s speech makes her a ‘cold mother’ (I.ii.77) for 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 toward 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. 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)

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 memories of old Hamlet are related by Hamlet. It is obscure whether Gertrude has truly forgotten her husband or is intentionally suppressing her memory of him. In any case, it was clearly her own decision to forget her deceased husband and take a new one. In his

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64 Döring, p. 12; Richardson, *Material Culture*, pp. 75-76.
condemnation of Gertrude’s remarry, 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)

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 blames his mother’s instant remarry 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 remarry to Claudius willingly also increases this suspicion. As many editors gloss, ‘will’ means sexual desire, and the ghost complains that ‘Gertrude was sexually responsive to Claudius’s advances’. 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 had ‘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

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66 ‘will, n.1’, *OED*, 5b [accessed 6 July 2016].
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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 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 enforced 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 her acceptance of remarriage. Her passivity also seems to be stressed by the fact that her consent is attributed to her female weakness: ‘Thy sex is weak’. Whereas weakness is her inner quality and what drives her to a wrong judgement from inside, 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 for her husband’s death, 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 from 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 remarriage is enforced 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.  

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67 Rist, p. 66. Emphasis mine.
emphasize Gertrude’s ‘active’ role in her acceptance of Claudius’s suit by using the very 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 toward 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive} \\
&\text{Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven} \\
&\text{And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge} \\
&\text{To prick and sting her. (I.v.85-88)}
\end{align*}
\]

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 most highlighted in the closet scene. After his accidental slaying of Polonius, Hamlet accuses his 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{O Hamlet, speak no more!} \\
&\text{Thou turn’st my very eyes into my soul,} \\
&\text{And there I see such black and grievèd spots} \\
&\text{As will leave there their tinct. (III.iv.88-91)}
\end{align*}
\]

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. Even in this scene or after, Gertrude never mentions anything about old Hamlet until her death. 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 his primary purpose of visitation is to encourage Hamlet to 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 Oakes argues 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 all witnesses of the ghost, Hamlet, Horatio, and the two sentinels, are not implicated in the murder of old Hamlet. Rather, Gertrude’s failure 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

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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 oblivion of her husband. He is a man of the past and no longer exists for her. Although it is unclear what motivates Gertrude’s oblivion of her husband and instant remarriage to another man, her denial to look back the past and ‘will’ to move forward seem to reflect a 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. Interestingly, together with old Hamlet, the ghostly figure of the deceased husband seems to have stopped haunting the early modern stage and condemning his widow’s new love or remarriage. Even though deceased husbands are occasionally described as ghosts in Jacobean and Caroline plays, they are almost invariably revealed as alive and come back to the stage as living figures. Gertrude’s oblivion of 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’. Hereafter, the deceased husband hardly appears on the early modern stage, and the widow’s remarriage is generally represented as unproblematic, even commendable.

4. Jealous Husbands and Remarrying Widows in Early Jacobean Satirical Comedies
After the husband’s ghost disappeared from the early modern stage, another type of the husband figure appeared in Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears* (1603-5) and Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* (1604-7), both of which were acted by the children’s companies in their indoor playhouses in the early Jacobean period. As James and Panek have demonstrated, both Chapman and Middleton were prolific writers on the theme of widows’ remarriage. Apart from *The Widow’s Tears*, staged by the Children of the Chapel at the Blackfriars, Chapman represents remarrying widows in *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1601-3) and *The Gentleman Usher* (1602-5), both of which are likely to have been acted by the same company. Similarly, Middleton wrote four plays about widows’ remarriage for the Children of St Paul’s, *The Phoenix* (1603-4), *Michaelmas Term* (1604-7), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1604-6), and *The Puritan* (1606-7), and continued to do so after the dissolution of the company in 1607, as I will discuss in Chapter Four.

It has often been suggested that Chapman’s and Middleton’s interest in the figure of the widow might have been developed through their personal experiences with widows. Some early critics have explained Chapman’s satirical representation of widows in *The Widow’s Tears* from his alleged failure in wooing a wealthy widow. According to the copies of letters found in the early twentieth century, Chapman, who was an impoverished younger brother, might have courted a wealthy widow but been rejected due to his poverty. 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 in the same year to Thomas Harvey, a debt-ridden gentleman grocer, who was twenty-one years younger than she. Soon after they got married, the couple started to dispute over the widow’s and her children’s property, and fifteen years of lawsuits ensued.

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69 See n. 2 above.
71 Gary Taylor, ‘Middleton, Thomas (bap. 1580, d. 1627)’, *ODNB* [accessed 6 July 2016]. See also Mildred G. Christian’s pioneering work, ‘A
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.\(^7^2\)

It is noteworthy that both Chapman and Middleton wrote many plays about widows for the children’s companies, whose audience consisted largely of ‘discontented courtiers and wits, younger sons of gentry, lawyers and Inns of Court students’.\(^7^3\) As Michael Shapiro maintains, the motif of a wealthy widow being conquered by a sexually attractive youth must have had a strong appeal to these young, ambitious bachelors.\(^7^4\) Even *Sir Giles Goosecap*, which dramatizes the chaste love between a virtuous, clever widow and an impoverished scholar, seems to flatter such spectators, particularly Inns of Court students. At the same time, however, it is incorrect to assume that Chapman and Middleton merely indulged these spectators’ ‘wishful fantasies’.\(^7^5\) For instance, the fact that the widow’s suitor was performed by a child actor might have undermined the character’s – and, by analogy, the audience’s – masculinity to some extent. According to several critics, actors of the children’s companies were mostly aged between ten and fourteen, ‘with some possibly as young as six or seven’, when they resumed regular performances in 1599-1600.\(^7^6\) When they performed *The Widow’s Tears* and *Michaelmas Term* in the mid-1600s, many of these actors were mid- or late-teens, while some might have been as young as eleven or twelve. Although older boy-actors are likely to have displayed some masculine features, including the lower voice, the manly body shape, or the beard, the majority of child actors must have looked young, immature, or feminine in comparison

_Sidelight on the Family History of Thomas Middleton*, *Studies in Philology*, 44.3 (1947), 490-96.


\(^7^4\) Shapiro, *Children of the Revels*, pp. 79-82.

\(^7^5\) Shapiro, *Children of the Revels*, p. 79.

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to adult men. If such a ‘child’ played a widow’s suitor and boasted his sexual potency, the discrepancy between the role and his actual body might have appeared comically or even ludicrously, making it uncomfortable for the audience to identify themselves with the figure completely.77

Similarly, Chapman’s and Middleton’s representations of widows and their deceased husbands are also complicated. As mentioned above, these playwrights’ attitudes toward widows are essentially satirical, and this is indicated by their representations of widows’ lamentation. As I demonstrated in Chapter Two and earlier in this chapter, widows are often associated with histrionic gestures, including lacerating the cheek or beating the breast, in Elizabethan plays. While these gestures convey widows’ extreme grief, there was always suspicion that such outward expressions of sorrow might simply be pretence. In his Essays, first published in English in 1603, Michel de Montaigne warns his reader not to regard widows’ ‘blubbred eyes, nor that pitty moving voice’, 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 keep a howling with most ostentation, who are lesse sorrowfull at heart’.78

Robert Copland also questions the sincerity of widows’ lamentation in The Seven Sorowes that Women Have When theyr Husbandes be Dead ([1565(?)]). 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. 401-02). That the widow’s name spreads everywhere even suggests her sexual promiscuity. This idea that widows try to ‘attract lovers by their mournful cries, gaining for themselves the reputation of loving their husbands’

77 My argument is inspired by Lamb’s and Munro’s incisive comments on ironic effects of children’s acting of adult roles. Edel Lamb, Performing Childhood in the Early Modern Theatre: The Children’s Playing Companies (1599-1613) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 18-25; Munro, Children of the Queen’s Revels, pp. 42-43.

is a traditional one. In *De vidua christiana* (1529), Desiderius Erasmus asks: ‘The woman who mourns the death of her husband immoderately – what is she doing but aiming at another marriage?’ In Wye Saltonstall’s character book, *Picturae loquentes* (1631), a widow ‘enforces a customary sigh as a tribute to the memory of her best deceased’, while ‘laugh[ing] in her sleeve, to thinke how shee shall gull her following suitors with this formality of sorrow’. As discussed above, Elizabeth’s and the Queen Mother’s self-conscious gestures of mourning in *Richard III* and *Lust’s Dominion* already highlighted the performativity of widows’ lamentation, and Shakespeare continued to raise this issue in his representation of Gertrude’s lamentation in *Hamlet*. Chapman and Middleton developed this scepticism further by associating widows’ lamentations and mourning gestures with these women’s hypocrisy and self-interest, including their aspiration for remarriage. Nevertheless, these playwrights do not direct their satire mainly against widows. By replacing the Elizabethan figure of the husband’s ghost with the comic figure of 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 a husband’s counterfeited death in Jacobean plays has been noted by several critics, it has never been considered in relation to the Elizabethan figure of the ghost. As I will discuss, although Chapman’s and Middleton’s cynicism and sardonic edge make their plays typically Jacobean, these playwrights are more favourable toward widows’ remarriage than their Elizabethan predecessors.

While supporting Tharsalio’s cynical comment, ‘how short-lived widows’ tears are’ (I.i.141-42), Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears* is almost

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79 St. John Chrysostom, qtd. in Phillippy, p. 15. On the medieval scepticism toward widows’ gestures of mourning, see Barasch, pp. 35-36.
certainly ‘pro-remarriage’. 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. At 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 ‘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.59-60), Tharsalio devises a strategy which 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.

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 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 (‘Begone’), 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. 84 Tharsalio’s

84 Oakes, p. 268; MacDonald, pp. 31-32.
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 his entrance to her house, the widow’s servants gossip about their mistress’s suitors and her prospect of remarriage. While Argus and Sthenia discuss whether Tharsalio dares to come again, Tharsalio suddenly enters and astonishes them:

Enter THARSALIO.

Arg.  Well, by Hercules, he comes not here.
Sth.  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)

As Akihiro Yamada notes, ‘Chapman in these lines is obviously making a parody of the first Ghost scene in Hamlet’. 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. Here, the widow’s ‘prayers’ do not invoke her husband’s ghost but her virile suitor with ‘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.

85 Chapman, Widow’s Tears, ed. Yamada, p. xxxvii.
86 Juneja, ‘Widowhood and Sexuality’, p. 66.
87 Panek, p. 85.
While dismissing the Elizabethan 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.\(^{88}\) 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’.\(^ {89}\) This grotesqueness was probably more stressed 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.\(^{90}\) Apart from Lysander’s coffin, 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 Elizabethan and Jacobean 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 the daylight


\(^{89}\) Panek, p. 86.

coming through the windows was very limited, especially in winter. Some contemporary accounts even suggest that windows might have been shuttered after the audience took their seats, in order ‘to create more advantageous conditions for candlelight’.\(^9\) 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)\(^2\)

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.18-21). Although Lycus is sympathetic toward the lamenting widow, his statement that he ‘never saw such an ecstasy of sorrow’ is as ironical 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.105-06).\(^3\)

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

\(^{91}\) Martin White, “‘When torchlight made an artificial noon’": Light and Darkness in the Indoor Jacobean Theatre”, in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, eds. Gurr and Karim-Cooper, pp. 115-36 (p. 117).

\(^{92}\) Döring, pp. 142-43.

making these gestures, what Cynthia does in her mourning costume on the stage is everything 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. Rather, as Panek argues, Chapman clearly punishes Cynthia’s hypocrisy and celebration of virginal chastity by highlighting the incongruence between her solemn appearance and earthly actions. 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. 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

94 Elizabeth Hodgson, “‘A Fine and Private Place”: Chapman’s Theatrical Widow”, MRDE, 22 (2009), 60-77.  
95 Panek, pp. 88-89.  
sexual desire is as natural as 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 own death is repeatedly described as ‘strange’ by other characters. For instance, 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.i24-28)

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 his wife to sleep only with himself, 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 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 virtue’ (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 ironical 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. Cynthia’s attraction to Lysander in disguise as a soldier importantly arouses the same question as Dido’s love for Aeneas in Marlowe’s Dido (1587-90), which I discussed in Chapter Two. If Cynthia has fallen in love with the soldier, who is not simply ‘another man’ of her husband’s ‘making and mettle’, but is actually himself, is she still condemnable? The ambiguous nature of Cynthia’s love for the soldier might have especially been 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 refuses to represent Thomasine’s instant marriage to Easy as extraordinary or condemnable. Some critics have explained this from Thomasine’s 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.98 Such a simplistic understanding of the character

98 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
has been challenged by Panek and James, who have revealed the irony in this ‘good angel’ being a lusty widow, actively seeking to fulfil her sexual desire for the younger gentleman like a huntress. 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 a broader issue of remembrance and oblivion in the play. As I will discuss, the widow’s oblivion of her deceased 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 toward the dead in Michaelmas Term is introduced by the following conversation between Rearage and Salewood at the beginning of the play. Having recently arrived at London for the court season, the two gentlemen start gossiping:

Rearage. Heard you the news?  
Salewood. Not yet.  
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 prospect of remarriage, the importance of this news for the prodigal gentlemen is apparent. For them, 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 by Rearage: ‘He savours. Stop your nose; no more of him’ (I.i.40). The deceased ‘savours’ or stinks if

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Kitch, ‘The Character of Credit and the Problem of Belief in Middleton’s City Comedies’, SEL, 47.2 (2007), 403-26 (pp. 421-22).

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we talk too much about him. 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’. 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 benefits 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{I have received of many, gifts o’er night} \\
&\text{Whom I have forgot ere morning. Meeting the men,} \\
&\text{I wished ’em to remember me again;} \\
&\text{They do so, then if I forget again,} \\
&\text{I know what helped before, that will help then.} \\
&\text{This is my course; for memory I have been told} \\
&\text{Twenty preserves, the best I find is gold. (I.ii.181-87)}
\end{align*}
\]

Lethe remembers people as he receives their gifts, 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:

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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 would 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 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 of this materialistic world, expects his widow to mourn for 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 counterfeiting 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:

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As I discussed in Chapter One, mourning garments were expensive commodities in early modern England. Here, ‘a mourning gown’ is no longer a sign of sorrow, but a monetary reward which 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 as superficial by cynical men, Thomasine acknowledges the artificiality of such gestures and appropriates them to pursue her own interest. 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 to that of women in past times is ironical, not only because such virtue cannot be expected in Middleton’s materialistic London, but also because it reveals that widows’ sorrow has always been counterfeited. 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’s inconstancy by 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 ironical that even Thomasine’s ‘remembrance’ of her husband stops her lamentation rather than provoking it. She speaks to Rearage, who congratulates her for 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.ii.56-62)

Thomasine does not simply refuse to remember the dead like other characters; even her memory of her husband – particularly his ‘unkindness’ or sexual impotency – 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 as seemings 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 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,*
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But some false spirit that assumes his shape
And seeks still to deceive me. (V.i.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. 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 to living figure is hindered by his oblivion of himself:

Judge. How are we sure you’re he?
Quomodo. O, you cannot miss, my lord.
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

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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 tried to forget deliberately. 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 materialistic London behind. Lethe acknowledges his low 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’ for her.

This chapter has considered the representation of widows in Chapman’s and Middleton’s plays in ‘the period of satire’ by focusing on their challenges to Elizabethan conventions, especially the staging of the husband’s ghost. In 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 oblivion of her husband in *Hamlet*, however, the husband’s ghost stopped haunting the early modern stage, and the general attitudes toward widows’ remarriage changed. While representing widows’ gestures of mourning as hypocritical and untrustworthy, Chapman and Middleton indicate widows’ new love or remarriage as a natural phenomenon. They rather problematize husbands’ irrational desire to control their wives’ sexuality even after their own deaths by replacing the Elizabethan figure of the husband’s ghost with the comic figure of the jealous husband,
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who tests his wife’s chastity by staging his own death. Chapman’s and Middleton’s favourable attitudes toward widows’ remarriage anticipate the next phase of the Jacobean representation of widows, ‘the period of romance’, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
After the decline of the children’s companies in 1607-8, it was the King’s Men who took over the popular theme of widows’ sexuality and remarriage. Now using a hall theatre as well as an amphitheatre after the re-acquisition of the Blackfriars playhouse in 1608, the King’s Men staged many plays with widow characters between 1608 and 1612. These transitional plays between ‘the period of satire’ in the 1600s and ‘the period of romance’ in the mid-1610s show a number of interesting features. Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1610) and Fletcher’s *The Captain* (1609-12) appropriate the type of the lusty widow in different ways. While Dame Pliant’s obedient or ‘pliant’ nature makes her a suitable prey for mercenary suitors in Jonson’s play, she is exempted from common charges against widows’ wilfulness and sensuality.¹ By contrast, Fletcher represents Lelia as a lusty widow *par excellence*, whose excessive desire even drives her to seduce her own father. Widows in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* (1607-9), *Cymbeline* (1609-11), and *The Winter’s Tale* (1611), and Beaumont’s *A King and No King* (1611) are all dramatically significant characters, and apart from Paulina in *The Winter’s Tale*, these widows are represented as formidable mothers whose ambition even destroys their children.² There are three characteristics in these plays performed between 1608 and 1612. First, widows are never represented as protagonists, although their actions are often crucial for the play’s plot. Second, widows are generally deprived of the audience’s sympathy, having almost no chance to share their feelings or thoughts through monologues. Thirdly, widows’

² For detailed discussions of these plays, see Kehler, *Shakespeare’s Widows*, pp. 51-91; James, ‘Jacobean Drama’, pp. 145-51; Oakes, pp. 189-93; Sutherland, p. 64.
autonomy is perceived as something dangerous and destructive, which needs to be checked by male authorities to avoid tragedy.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the King’s Men performed three plays whose protagonists are autonomous widows in ‘the period of romance’ in the mid-1610s: Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14) and Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1614) and *The Widow* (1615-17). While ‘the period of satire’ discussed in Chapter Three saw many city comedies staged by the children’s companies, including Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* (1604-7) and *The Puritan* (1606-7), the three plays of ‘the period of romance’ are set in the Mediterranean region, namely Italy and Istria, a peninsula now part of Slovenia and Croatia, and share many features with romance literature. In these plays, widows are young, beautiful, and wealthy, and their new love or remarriage is either supported or unquestioned by playwrights. Like romantic heroines, widows fall in love with men and use their wit to realize their own happiness. They are given a voice, intelligence, and psychological depth, and usually attract the audience’s sympathy by communicating their inner struggles. Although these women seem to assimilate to the character type of the lusty widow by seeking remarriage to men who are socially and economically inferior to themselves, Webster and Middleton carefully avoid its negative connotations by demonstrating that widows’ remarriage can be based on love as much as worldly desire.

In this chapter, I will first discuss *Malfi* by focusing on a boy actor who might have played the Duchess in the first production, and demonstrate how the gender ambiguity or ‘liminality’ of a widow and a boy actor might have overlapped on the early modern stage. Then, I will examine Middleton’s comedies separately after discussing their possible relations to Webster’s tragedy. For *More Dissemblers*, I will consider Middleton’s uses of the stage balcony and other stage features in relation to the idealized image of the Duchess of Milan as a virtuous widow. For *The Widow*, I will discuss Middleton’s rewriting of the theatrical conventions of the ‘lusty widow’ trope by highlighting metatheatrical references and the issue of widows’ ‘will’.

1. Between Genders: A Widow and a Boy Actor in *The Duchess of Malfi*

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3 On the date of *More Dissemblers*, see Chapter One, n. 70 above.
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 entities 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 during the 1960s and 1970s’.

According to van Gennep, liminality refers to the state of transition, confusion, and ambiguity experienced by an individual or a group during rituals which mark 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: ‘the most characteristic midliminal symbolism is that of paradox, or being both this and that’.

Boy actors were such liminal entities wavering ‘between two worlds’, namely childhood and adulthood, boyhood and manhood, and apprenticeship and mastership, in early modern England. According to Lucy Munro, early modern writers often divide a man’s life into several stages, as exemplified by Henry Cuffe’s *The Differences of the Age of Man’s Life* (1607). In Cuffe’s model, childhood runs from birth to age twenty-five, at which many men completed their apprenticeship and entered marriage, both of which were considered as important signs of male adulthood. Childhood is then divided

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5 Van Gennep and Turner, qtd. in Bruster and Weimann, p. 39.
into four parts. Infancy lasts until 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, childhood ends with youth which runs until age twenty-five.6 As Bruce R. Smith and Gina Bloom explain, children in adolescence and youth occupied ‘a precarious position in the social order’ in the early modern period.7 Having left home to work and/or obtain vocational training, these children 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’.8

Boy actors were among such ‘precarious’ adolescents and youths. David Kathman’s seminal study has shown that boy actors who played women on the early modern stage were ‘no younger than twelve and no older than twenty-one or twenty-two, with a median of around sixteen or seventeen’.9 Although boy actors could be bound to adult companies in various ways, the most common form of employment was apprenticeship.10 In London livery companies, an apprentice was bound to his master for seven years or so, during which he lived in his master’s household, got 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. For instance, 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

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6 Qtd. in Munro, *Children of the Queen’s Revels*, p. 39.
8 Bloom, p. 39.
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games. He shall not haunt taverns nor playhouses, nor absent himself from the master’s service day or night unlawfully.  

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 established profession, and when his term was over, he often stayed with his master’s acting company as a sharer or a hired man.  

It is likely that the liminal state of boy actors 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 or boy actors were often perceived as analogous to women in early modern society. In early modern medical discourse based on the one-sex model, in which the male and female genitals were perceived as identical and simply reversed, boys were believed to become men by passing ‘through a “female” developmental phase’. Although this model, most famously espoused by Thomas Laqueur’s *Making Sex* (1990) and Stephen Greenblatt’s ‘Fiction and Friction’ (1988), has been widely criticized for oversimplifying the complexity of the early modern understanding of sex, it illustrates how boys’ gender was perceived in this period. Boys were also associated with gender ambiguity in the theory of humours. For instance, they were considered to have small and shrill voices like women’s, because their bodies were also moist and lacked heat to dilate their vocal organs and lower their voices. Boys and women were also both subordinated to patriarchal figures, who tried to control and exploit their economic and sexual resources. This point has often been made in relation to boy actors. While Lisa Jardine, Susan

11 Qtd. in Rappaport, p. 234; Barrie, pp. 238-39.
14 Peterson, pp. 143-46.
Zimmerman, and Peter Stallybrass have demonstrated how early modern acting companies might have deployed cross-dressed boy actors’ androgynous beauty to arouse the male audience members’ hetero- and homosexual desires, Stephen Orgel has discussed how this fantasy of the sexual availability of boy actors might have been related to their social and economic vulnerability as apprentices.\(^{16}\) Since boy actors lacked control over their bodies as well as other forms of autonomy, they were regarded as ‘lesser’ men or intermediate entities between women and men, and this gender ambiguity might have enabled them to become erotic objects for adult men.\(^{17}\)

It is therefore symbolic that boy actors started their career 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 past and future, in the early modern period. The Christian notion that the husband and the wife ‘shall be one flesh’ (Genesis 2.24) seems to have generated the idea that widows were half-dead, half-living entities.\(^{18}\) For instance, in The Education of a Christian Woman (1524), 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’.\(^{19}\) 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’.\(^{20}\) Indeed, as I discussed in Chapter One, 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 past and future, because widows could leave mourning for their deceased husbands and start their new lives, possibly with new husbands. In this sense, remarriage was a significant event


\(^{17}\) Orgel, pp. 64-71.

\(^{18}\) In this chapter, all quotations are from the King James Bible.

\(^{19}\) Vives, p. 299.

or a rite of passage that transferred widows from death to life, past to future, or tragedy to comedy.\textsuperscript{21} In early modern plays, widows’ progress from the tragic past to the comic marriage often creates tragicomic effects, and this is especially significant in \textit{Malfi}, whose widow protagonist not only remaries but also bears children, which is almost a unique example apart from Drue’s \textit{The Duchess of Suffolk} (1624).\textsuperscript{22} As Emma Smith writes, the Duchess’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’.\textsuperscript{23} 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.\textsuperscript{24}

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. It is likely that early modern English people 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 [\textit{nata homo}], in spirit and in body’.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, widows were often associated with qualities which were considered as unseemly for women and more appropriate for men, such as boldness or self-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Mary Beth Rose, \textit{The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 159.
\item \textsuperscript{22} The representations of the maternal body in these plays are discussed in Albert H. Tricomi, \textit{Reading Tudor-Stuart Texts through Cultural Historicism} (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), ch. 7.
\end{itemize}
assertiveness. For instance, Joseph Swetnam writes in his notorious misogynist tract, _The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women_ (1615): ‘commonly widowes are so froward, so waspish, and so stubborne, that thou canst not wrest them from their wills’.26

Widows and boy actors are thus described as liminal entities by early modern writers as well as our contemporary critics. Still, there is one crucial difference between them. While gender ambiguity is described 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. If so, when a boy actor played a widow, how did his/her gender ambiguity appear on the early modern stage? As modern critics have shown extensively, Webster’s tragic heroine is a highly complex, multifaceted character. While her sovereignty and widowhood make her an autonomous and masculine figure, she also demonstrates her marital love for Antonio and maternal care for her three children.27 In this section, I will highlight this complexity of Webster’s representation of the Duchess from a new perspective by focusing on a boy actor, Richard Robinson, who is likely to have played the widow in the first production. Robinson’s acting of the Duchess is unproven but highly probable, as discussed below, and offers a productive way to consider how widows’ and boy actors’ gender ambiguity or other forms of liminality might have overlapped or influenced each other on the early modern 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.28 The first quarto of _Malfi_ (1623) contains a list of

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actors, which is unique in showing the cast for both the first production and a revival. Richard Sharpe, whose name appears on the list, could not play the first Duchess, for he was apprenticed to John Heminges on 21 February 1616 and had not joined the company in late 1613 or 1614, when the play is considered to have been first acted.

Fig. 32. ‘The Actors Names’, from John Webster, The Tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy (1623). © The British Library Board, 644.f.72, sig. A2v. Used with Permission.

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There are two pieces of information that suggest that Robinson might have played the Duchess in the first production. First, Robinson 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.). Similarly, he is the only actor specializing in female roles and mentioned in the actors’ list of Fletcher’s Bonduca (1613-14). That Robinson probably played the Lady and Bonduca is noteworthy, because these women also challenge male authority like the Duchess. Bonduca disturbs gender hierarchy repeatedly by calling manly Roman soldiers ‘[g]irls’ (I.i.11). While Bonduca’s resistance to the Roman invasion of Britain is likely to have been perceived favourably by the early modern audience, the fact that her resistance is inseparable from her antagonism toward men, who have raped her daughters and now threaten her sovereignty, probably complicated their response to her. Bonduca’s defiance to male authority culminates as she commits suicide with her daughters on the stage balcony, while looking down at the Romans and calling them ‘fools’ (IV.iv.141). The Lady also defies the notion of male superiority in The Lady’s Tragedy. 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 great 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 might have been influenced by his experience of playing these strong women associated with widowhood. For instance, the fact that both Bonduca and the Lady commit suicide on the stage suggests that Robinson was possibly 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.\textsuperscript{31} 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:

\textit{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,  
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.  

\textit{Merecraft.} They say he’s an ingenious youth!  

\textit{Engine.} Oh, sir! And dresses himself the best! Beyond

As G. E. Bentley claims, Jonson’s praise is ‘no small tribute’. 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. Jonson’s encomium suggests that Robinson was probably a skilful, attractive, and popular actor, who could possibly satisfy 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. On 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.82), and entertains them with jousting and ‘chargeable revels’ (I.333). That Ferdinand humbly requests Bosola’s ‘provisorship of your horse’ (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.340), they need to rely on her ‘own discretion’ (I.292) in the end.

As Emily C. Bartels maintains, the fact that the Duchess conceals her masculine audacity under the pretence of female submissiveness makes her a

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34 See especially Jankowski; Callaghan.
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 Smith explains, the Duchess’s soliloquy is notably different from that of Hamlet. Whereas Hamlet confides 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 in distance, even in awe. By comparing herself to a brave soldier and her brothers to ‘old wives’ (I.i.348), the Duchess subverts 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 already mentioned, 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 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

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36 Smith, ‘Shakespeare and Early Modern Tragedy’, pp. 139-40.
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Robinson. Assuming that Robinson was not an anomaly among boy actors, we can infer from Kathman’s study that Robinson could be as young as twelve in 1611, and as old as twenty-two in 1616. This makes Robinson born between 1594 and 1599, which roughly corresponds with his birth dates proposed by Kathman (1598) and Munro (c. 1595). If so, he was between ages 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 then not unlikely that the boy actor’s body had already displayed a number of masculine features usually developed at puberty by 1613-14. For instance, there were issues of height and cracking of the voice, as Hamlet reminds us while talking to a boy actor in a travelling troupe: ‘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 brings in Wittipol, claiming that Robinson has recommended him:

_Merecraft._ But he is too tall!

_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. 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. Although Martin White argues that Robinson might have appeared in

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40 Cumming et al., p. 47.
these ‘raised shoes to increase his height’, the fact that Wittipol/Robinson needs to pretend that ‘he wears cioppinos’ to disguise his height suggests that he was naturally tall.\(^{41}\) Although Merccraft may simply mean that Robinson was too tall to play a woman, it would have been more comical if Wittipol/Robinson was taller than the actors of Merccraft and Engine. Indeed, Jonson jokes 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.iii.71).\(^{42}\) 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 had already been tall in 1613-14, 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 suggest that boys were generally considered to change their voices around age fourteen in the early modern period. 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.\(^{43}\) Although modern critics have long assumed that women’s roles were played only by pre-pubescent boys on the early modern stage, this idea has justly been challenged by recent critics. As John H. Astington and David Mann maintain, it is more likely that some ‘female’ voices on the early modern stage were not ‘unbroken trebles’ of pre-pubescent boys, but ‘lighter adult male voices, perhaps trained to attain, or retain, higher registers’.\(^{44}\) This argument also matches with the fact that many boy actors continued to play female roles in their late teens or early twenties.

\(^{42}\) Jonson, The Devil is an Ass, ed. Happé, p. 166.
\(^{43}\) Qtd. in Munro, Children of the Queen’s Revels, pp. 39-40.
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: five speeches, all 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 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 more stressed if the actor delivered her defiant speech in his manly, ‘cracked’ voice.

The boy actor’s adolescent body might 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.45 Indeed, it is symbolic that the Duchess makes Antonio kneel (or sit down) and rise up repeatedly in this scene. For instance, when Antonio kneels down to ask her intention of giving 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  

45 Jankowski, pp. 235-36.
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: ‘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 might have been 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 disrupted the traditional hierarchy between wife and husband visually 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 that ‘[a]ll discord, without this circumference, / Is only to be pitied, and not feared’ (I.i.469-70), Antonio 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 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 might have been especially striking if the Duchess spoke these lines in her/his masculine voice.

On the other hand, the same notion of the marital couple as ‘one flesh’ might have been strengthened simultaneously, because the post-pubertal voice of the boy actor was probably 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:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Ant.} & \quad \text{Echo, I will not talk with thee,} \\
& \quad \text{For thou art a dead thing,} \\
\text{Echo.} & \quad \text{Thou art a dead thing. (V.iii.38-39)}
\end{align*}
\]
The similarity between the voices of the actors of Antonio and the Duchess possibly stressed the ominous meaning of Antonio’s speech by suggesting that he would soon be ‘a dead thing’ like the Duchess, with whom he became ‘one flesh’.

If Robinson played the Duchess, it might also have brought in metatheatrical interpretations to the relationship between the Duchess and Ferdinand. Although the Duchess defies two brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand, I will here concentrate on the widow’s 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. From the opening scene, Ferdinand tries to reconfirm the absoluteness of his power repeatedly 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 much stronger, desire to control her. He sends Bosola into the Duchess’s household ‘[t]o note all the particulars 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. It deserves attention that Robinson might have played the Duchess against Richard Burbage’s Ferdinand, because ‘it is not improbable that he was Burbage’s apprentice’. Robinson witnessed

Burbage’s will of 12 March 1619 with Nicholas Tooley among others. 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 for Tooley’s apprenticeship to Burbage. If so, 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 in 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 evinces their intimacy. Both Kathman and Munro accept Robinson’s apprenticeship to Burbage as plausible.

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 been most recently 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. For instance, as Paul S. Seaver and Ronda Arab have shown separately, apprentices were ‘the perennial culprits’ in London riots throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gathering with other groups of dissidents ‘to harass prostitutes, attack brothels, assault foreigners and gentlemen, and destroy property’, apprentices not only

50 Kathman, ‘Grocers’, pp. 20-21; Munro, ODNB.
51 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.
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disturbed the surveillance of the Crown and the City, but also undermined their masters’ authority by revealing their impotency in controlling their own apprentices.\textsuperscript{53} 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 about a boy actor, who took female roles and was thus ‘engaged in a specialism quite different from that of his master’.\textsuperscript{54} Indeed, early modern boy actors often left a stronger impression on the audience’s mind than adult actors. For instance, when a young scholar named Henry Jackson saw the performance of \textit{Othello} by the King’s Men in Oxford, 1610, he was moved most profoundly by the boy actor playing Desdemona, as evinced by his note which ‘focuses almost entirely on Desdemona, relegating Othello to “her husband” who slays his wife’.\textsuperscript{55} 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 \textit{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). That both writers put emphasis on their experiences of ‘seeing’ the Duchess implies that they were strongly impressed by the boy actor’s performance, although it is unclear which boy actor they are referring to. 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.\textsuperscript{56} As Jonson’s use of Robinson in \textit{The Devil is an Ass} also implies, boy actors often made a significant contribution to the

\textsuperscript{54} Mann, p. 48.
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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’ 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. 57 The representation of the woman’s/boy actor’s body in *The Lady’s Tragedy* is two-fold. On 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 a 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 to some extent. The confrontation between the talented boy actor and his invincible master must also have been appealing to the audience and commercially beneficial for the company.

If Robinson and Burbage acted together in *Malfi*, the Duchess’s defiance to Ferdinand’s authority might have implied the boy actor’s other challenge to his master. As in *The Lady’s Tragedy*, the play’s conflict centres

on the boy actor’s ‘female’ body in \textit{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 control his sister’s body. While the Lady demonstrates that she has command over her own body by committing suicide, the Duchess shows this by remarrying to a man of her choice and bearing his three children.

Interestingly, the Duchess’s fruitful relationship with Antonio not only vindicates her autonomous choice of remarriage, but also emphasizes her brothers’ sterility. 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). 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. 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 Acts 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) after Delio has left for Rome in Act 2 Scene 2. As Delio’s metatheatrical joke reveals, the duration

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59 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.
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.⁶⁰

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 in the early modern period. For instance, Francis Bacon maintains that ‘the characteristic property of boys’ is that they ‘cannot generate’ in The Great Instauration (1620).⁶¹ Indeed, as Ann Jennalie Cook shows, the ages of puberty, procreativity, and marriage were often associated with one another in the early modern period. For instance, 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, posthumously published in 1686 after his death in 1624.⁶² 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 as 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’

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apprentices or journeymen in the early modern period, it is ironic that the boy actor who might have confronted his master as a rebellious, remarrying widow, now won his master’s widow like Antonio and ‘consolidated his position in the company’.

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)

According to Leah S. Marcus, ‘massy sheet of lead’ refers to ‘a coffin lined with lead to delay decomposition’, which was popular among aristocrats. 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 to 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 Three. 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.

63 Munro, ODNB.
64 Webster, Malfi, ed. Marcus, p. 222.
Ferdinand’s desire to control his sister’s body is frustrated until the end. It is notable that the Duchess requests Bosola as follows before her death: ‘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 consider 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, it rather signifies that she has successfully circumvented Ferdinand’s obsessive desire to control her body. If Robinson and Burbage played the Duchess and Ferdinand respectively, and Robinson was indeed an apprentice of Burbage, the widow’s demonstration of her right to dispose of her own body and her brother’s inability to control it might have acquired another significance on a metatheatrical level by suggesting the boy actor’s successful challenge to his master.

In this chapter-part, I have considered how the gender ambiguity and other forms of liminality of widows and boy actors might have overlapped or interacted with each other on the early modern stage. As discussed above, modern critics have often perceived boy actors as analogous to women, because their social, economic, and sexual autonomy was also restricted by patriarchal figures. When a boy actor played a widow, however, his gender ambiguity might have appeared disturbing. While the boy actor’s adolescent

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body and relationship with the actor of Ferdinand possibly strengthened the formidable image of the Duchess, the widow’s autonomy and her defiance to patriarchal authority might have enacted the boy actor’s challenge to his master on the early modern stage. Focusing on the problematic status of widows and boy actors as liminal entities in early modern society highlights the complexity of Webster’s widow-character from a new angle.

2. ‘An You Will’: Middleton’s Dramaturgy in Two Comedies

Apart from Webster’s tragedy, the King’s Men performed two more plays about widows and remarriage in the mid-1610s: Middleton’s More Dissemblers Besides Women and The Widow. It is not unlikely that these plays were inspired by Malfi. According to John Jowett, More Dissemblers was probably performed soon after the production of Middleton’s Masque of Cupid on 4 January 1614. The masque was produced by the City to celebrate the marriage between Frances Howard and Robert Carr, and Middleton recycled its song about Cupid in More Dissemblers, possibly to satirize this notorious couple. The Widow almost certainly postdates More Dissemblers as it refers to another song in More Dissemblers as well-known, and is dated late 1615 or 1616 by Gary Taylor. Although there is no evidence that More Dissemblers postdates Malfi, which is usually dated late 1613 or 1614, Middleton’s interest in the predicament of an Italian, Catholic widow in More Dissemblers makes it plausible that the play was influenced by Webster’s tragedy.

It is tempting to think that Robinson might have played widows in Middleton’s comedies as well as Webster’s tragedy. This idea is especially appealing in regard to More Dissemblers, whose protagonist is also a widowed duchess. Inga-Stina Ewbank’s hypothesis that Burbage might have

66 The Widow, II.i.69.
played the Cardinal, a hypocritical prelate upholding the Duchess of Milan’s chastity, is similarly attractive, considering that Burbage had played Hamlet and Ferdinand, both of whom insist on widows’ chastity and condemn their remarriage.\textsuperscript{70} If so, Robinson and Burbage might have confronted each other again as a wilful widow seeking remarriage and a misogynistic authority obsessed with female chastity in \textit{More Dissemblers}. The case is less strong for \textit{The Widow}. First, as Michael Warren and Gary Taylor suggest, it is not impossible that Robinson played Francisco, whose actor is described as accustomed to playing women, instead of Valeria, the wealthy widow.\textsuperscript{71} Although this metatheatrical joke could be applied to any former boy actor, the fact that \textit{The Widow} was acted around the same time as \textit{The Devil Is an Ass} makes their hypothesis possible. Second, even if Robinson took a female part, he might have played Philippa, the adulterous wife of Brandino, rather than Valeria, her widowed sister. Philippa has a hundred more lines than Valeria, and the company might have wanted to allocate the longest part to this popular actor. In any case, it is significant that the most prestigious company of the day staged three plays about widows within a span of two or three years. Not only does it testify the popularity of the theme of widows’ remarriage, but also suggests that the production of these plays might have enabled the Jacobean audience to compare different widow characters and consider the issue of female widowhood from diverse perspectives.

In this section, I will first examine \textit{More Dissemblers} in relation to the issue of widows’ vows. My aim is to develop Lila Geller’s study of the Duchess’s vow and its religious background by discussing how Middleton uses the stage balcony and other stage features to demystify the idealized image of the Duchess’s chaste widowhood.\textsuperscript{72} Then, I will consider Middleton’s rewriting of the theatrical convention of the ‘lusty widow’ trope in \textit{The Widow} by focusing on metatheatrical references and the issue of widows’ ‘will’.

A. The Heavenly and Fallen Widow in *More Dissemblers*

As Geller has demonstrated, Middleton highlights the issue of vows of chastity through his characterization of the Duchess of Milan in *More Dissemblers*. As soon as the play opens, the Duchess is praised as a virtuous widow 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. It is not uncommon for widows to take vows of celibacy in early modern plays. In Marston’s *The Insatiate Countess* (1608-13), 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.53-54). T. B.’s *The Country Girl* (1632–c. 1633) is unique in representing an English widow who has ‘vow’d / To live, and die a Widdow’ (sig. B1v). However, while these plays soon forget about widows’ vows, *More Dissemblers* explores this complex issue further by highlighting its theological background.

According to Christopher F. Black, there were several types of vows of chastity which could be taken by widows among other single women in early modern Italy. Those who entered convents could either become fully consecrated nuns and confined 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 form of a vow of chastity, which is the closest to the one taken by the Duchess in *More Dissemblers*, was increasingly promoted by moderate bishops after the Council of Trent (1563), who perceived the Tridentine emphasis on female imprisonment as too strict and promoted ‘a “third state”, for celibate women to serve God in the world and remain honoured at home’. Some recusant widows for whom entering convents was not an option might have taken similar vows to the Duchess’s in early modern England. In *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons* (1621), published together with Fulvio Androzzi’s *The Widdowes Glasse* (1621) and circulated among recusants, 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

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[...] is not so co[n]venient’, can still pursue a ‘pious and laudable’ life by ‘consecrat[ing] their Virginity to Almighty God’.

As Geller explains, Protestant reformers attacked the Catholic celebration of celibacy, and a vow of chastity was one of their main targets. Although the arguments of reformers were complex and multifaceted, there are mainly two points which are relevant to my discussion of More Dissemblers. First, it is a sinful arrogance to take these vows, because continence is not innate to human nature, but ‘the special gift’ from God. 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 even disparage marriage, a God-given remedy against carnal sin. Second, these vows are 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’. 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 higher place’, these vows are ‘plain idolatry and abominable in the sight of God’. Although these polemics are mainly concerned with monastic vows, and do not necessarily discuss widows’ vows, the fact that many widows entered, worked for, or even founded convents suggest that these accusations were pertinent to widows’ vows as well.

Indeed, as I will discuss, Middleton dismises the Duchess’s vow of chastity by associating it with these negative images of idolatry, arrogance, and self-deception, all of which were sins to which Catholics were considered to be especially prone in early modern England. Although some of these aspects have already been highlighted by Geller, her study almost exclusively

74 Lessius and Androzzi, pp. 1-4.
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focuses on speeches, drawing on speech act theory and considering the nature of a vow as an illocutionary act. Instead, I will examine how Middleton demystifies the idealized image of the Duchess’s chastity visually by using stage features, including the stage balcony. Since More Dissemblers could have been acted in either the Globe or the Blackfriars, I will focus on those features which were common in both theatres.

At the beginning of More Dissemblers, Middleton establishes 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. The play opens with a song coming ‘from the Duchess’ lodgings’ (I.i.8) or the stage balcony:

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.
Come and read her life and praise,
That singing weeps, and sighing plays. (I.i.1-6)

By opening his play with these ‘melancholy strains’ (I.i.8) celebrating the widow’s chastity, Middleton invites the audience to enter a world which seems to be solemn and austere, and was almost certainly foreign to the early modern English audience. As Thomas Allen Lytle observes, the early modern audience might have actually seen the Duchess sitting on the stage balcony in her ‘funeral weeds’. Alternatively, the Duchess might have been concealed from the audience’s view by the curtain, which was a common feature of the stage balcony in early modern theatres, to enhance the sacred, inviolable image of her chastity. In stark contrast to the solemnity of the chaste widow on the stage balcony, Lactantio and Aurelia, an amorous couple, enter the main stage and indulge in flirtation. As Lytle maintains, the physicality of the

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79 Geller, p. 288.
81 Lytle p. 179.
82 Dessen and Thomson, p. 1.
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passionate lovers’ ‘dance’ below makes a striking contrast with the
metaphysical effect of the chaste widow’s ‘music’ above.83

However, Middleton subtly disturbs the boundary between the two
spheres, while seemingly stressing the contrast between the stage balcony and
the main stage. It is notable that Lactantio, the Cardinal’s lecherous and
hypocritical nephew, praises the Duchess’s chastity for its rarity. She is a
‘s 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 notes, the image of death evokes orgasm in this amorous
exchange.84 These lovers prefer instant carnal pleasure rather than 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 these lovers, a vow of chastity is simply material
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.

The sacred image of the Duchess’s chastity is then degraded by the
Cardinal’s idolatry.85 It is notable that the Cardinal not only calls the
Duchess’s vow ‘[i]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,

83 Lytle, pp. xci-xcii.
85 Geller, p. 299.
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And bow to the chaste health of our great Duchess,
Kissing her constant name. (I.ii.13-15)

It is almost certain that the Cardinal’s speech was accompanied by his kneeling and bowing to the abstracts, as well as his kissing them. As Lytle notes, the Cardinal’s gestures might have reminded the early modern audience of gestures performed by Catholic priests during Mass, whose theatricality was often derided by Protestant writers. His gestures are also likely to have evoked the Catholic worship of the images of saints, which, according to Alison Shell, was attacked by Middleton himself 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)

Importantly, the Cardinal’s worship of the objects not only associates him with idolatry, but also reveals his arrogance and self-esteem, because these abstracts are written by himself. It is ironic that the Cardinal represents himself as a creator of this virtuous widow whom he calls the ‘great’st perfection’ (I.ii.46) by becoming an author of these abstracts, while denouncing the imperfection of women created by God: ‘a creature that’s so doubtful as a woman’ (I.i.17). Here, the Cardinal implicitly challenges the authority of God as the Creator by trying to create a perfect woman, which could not be even created by Him. Lactantio’s revelation that his uncle likes the Duchess’s vow and chastity in general ‘above his book’ (I.ii.57), namely the Holy Bible, is telling in this context, because the Cardinal writes and adores these abstracts or his own ‘book’ instead of reading the Bible. Middleton questions the sacred image of the Duchess as a chaste widow by

86 Lytle, p. 183; Williamson, pp. 85-86.
revealing 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 in the play’s world collapses as soon as the Duchess falls in love with Andrugio. Before his triumphal procession enters, the Duchess reappears on the stage balcony with her maid Celia. If the Duchess was concealed behind the curtain in the opening scene, this was the first time for the early modern audience to see her as well as to hear her on the stage. Like the Duchess of Malfi’s defiant monologue in the opening scene of Webster’s tragedy, the Duchess of Milan’s speech probably astonished the early modern audience by disrupting the positive image of her virginal chastity as it reveals that her vow has been taken neither for her wifely devotion nor for her piety:

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)

As Panek argues, although the Duchess refers to her deceased husband and ‘religious love’, her speech clearly reveals her latent fear of men’s mockery, as well as her desire to live peacefully by ‘conform[ing] herself to the male-designed image of virtuous widowhood’.88 Although the Duchess perceives herself as a proto-feminist figure who fights against ‘our male enemies’, the fact that she tries to protect her own reputation by distinguishing herself from the rest of women, who ‘proclaim desire’ and remarry, makes her effort vain, if not hypocritical. Like the Cardinal, the Duchess strongly believes that her chastity is invincible. For instance, when the Cardinal persuades the Duchess to expose herself to the world so that she can demonstrate her perfect chastity to sceptical courtiers, he alludes to an image used by Christ:

88 Panek, p. 31.
'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. (Matthew 5.15-16)

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’. The Duchess does not even mention sharing her virtues with others; she is determined to come out from her lodgings only to make her own ‘glory’ (I.iii.53) absolute. In this context, 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.

Cupid’s descent from heaven suddenly changes the whole structure of the staging and the Duchess’s self-perception. As Jowett points out, the
spectacle is now divided into three parts: Andrugio’s procession on the main stage; the Duchess and the Cardinal on the stage balcony; and Cupid singing in flight.\textsuperscript{89} Cupid’s appearance not only reveals that there is a higher place than the Duchess’s balcony, but also removes the boundary between the sacred and the secular by revealing that everything is now under the control of this ‘little conqueror’ (I.iii.77). While the Duchess falls in love with Andrugio, Andrugio is occupied by his thought of Aurelia, his unfaithful lover, ‘whom his eye greedily sought for’ (I.iii.92) but failed to find. The divine image of the Duchess’s chaste widowhood is dismissed completely as she acknowledges her sexual desire: ‘I confess I’m mortal’ (I.iii.107). The Duchess’s confession not only reveals that her vow of chastity is no longer tenable, but also questions the notion of a vow of chastity itself. As Panek observes, the fact that the Duchess requires strict confinement to keep her vow evinces that a vow of chastity is, after all, impossible.\textsuperscript{90} As will be revealed in the next act, the Duchess’s vow has been taken only to satisfy her jealous husband and kept by the Duchess only to increase her self-esteem.

Even after the sacred image of the Duchess as a virtuous widow collapses, Middleton continues to question the Catholic celebration of celibacy by revealing that the ideal of chaste widowhood is only a matter of appearance and performance. After she has fallen in love with Andrugio, the Duchess symbolically descends from the stage balcony to the main stage, and starts preparing herself for the pursuit of her new love:

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)

It is notable that Middleton articulates the widow’s youth by suggesting her actual age, and stresses that it is natural for her to adorn herself with ‘the youthfull’st dressings’ and ‘the powder […] rich in cassia’ (II.i.5-6) to attract her new lover. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the Duchess

\textsuperscript{90} Panek, p. 31.
is still dressed in black at this moment, while calling for colourful dressings. In fact, when the Cardinal enters and sees the Duchess weeping in fear of breaking her vow, he readily believes that she is still weeping for ‘[t]he memory of her seven years’ deceased lord’ (II.i.27). This discrepancy between the Duchess’s appearance as a virtuous widow and her inner self as a passionate widow is betrayed as she re-enacts her vow of chastity with the Cardinal in her husband’s role. As Ewbank notes, this re-enactment of the Duchess’s vow is almost like a play-within-a-play, which strongly evokes Hamlet’s The Murder of Gonzago.\(^91\) While the Player King in The Murder of Gonzago calmly accepts his wife’s future remarriage and admonishes her against taking a vow of chastity 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 demanded that his wife vow perpetual chastity. It is therefore significant that the Duchess refuses to repeat her vow by claiming: ‘I can go no further’ (II.i.88). By renouncing her role as a chaste widow and confessing her new love in her mourning costume, the Duchess not only reveals that the ideal of the virtuous widow is merely a matter of appearance, but also liberates herself from the scenario of a chaste widow’s ‘fame and honour’s story’, which has been forced upon her by her husband and reproduced by the Cardinal in his abstracts.\(^92\) In this context, it is symbolic that the Duchess woos Andrugio by forging his love letter, which she makes him read and enact a role of an aggressive suitor unintentionally:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Andrugio.} Read? ‘Most fair Duchess!’

\textit{Duchess.} O, have you found it now?

There’s a sweet flatt’ring phrase for a beginning.

(IV.iii.159-60)
\end{quote}

Although the fact that the Duchess uses her sovereignty to arrest Andrugio and keep him ‘close prisoner in our palace’ (IV.iii.199) might have aroused the audience’s fear of this formidable widow ruler to some extent, her attempt to write her own story instead of staging the one prepared by her jealous

\(^91\) Ewbank, p. 168.
\(^92\) Ewbank, pp. 167-68; Yachnin, pp. 163-64.
husband and the Catholic priest is likely to have been supported by the early modern audience.

While representing the Duchess’s renunciation of her vow of chastity sympathetically, Middleton does not reduce the play to a piece of anti-Catholic propaganda. In fact, the Cardinal also comes to speak for the Protestant notion of marriage as a source of procreation. After refusing to repeat her vow of chastity before the Cardinal, the Duchess pretends that she has fallen in love with Lactantio, the Cardinal’s nephew, in order to disguise her love for Andrugio. Although the Cardinal initially denounces the Duchess’s inconstancy, he soon sets his ‘holy anger’ (II.i.2) aside and contemplates the prospect of his nephew’s advantageous marriage to the Duchess. Predictably, the Cardinal changes his course and starts proclaiming the invalidity of the Duchess’s ‘forcéd vow that was but knit / By the strange jealousy of your dying lord’ (IV.ii.37-38). It is notable that the Cardinal encourages the Duchess into remarriage not only by stressing the invalidity of her vow, but also by upholding the Protestant ideal of fruitful marriage.  

In his attempt to persuade the Milanese lords in favour of the Duchess’s remarriage, the Cardinal says:

 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:

[...] 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)

  May you be fruitful, madam,

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93 Geller, p. 303.
While the Cardinal’s speeches clearly reveal his hypocrisy and ambition, it is noteworthy that he correctly understands practical concerns and the gender ideology behind the Protestant celebration of fruitful marriage by stressing the woman’s role as a breeder and its importance for dynastic succession.

Indeed, Middleton demonstrates how the Protestant teaching of fruitful marriage can be as oppressive for women as the Catholic celebration of chastity by using the figures of Aurelia and the Page. Middleton not only associates marriage with the same image of physical confinement as the Duchess’s chastity by representing Aurelia’s flight from her enforced marriage to the Governor of the Fort, whose very name foreshadows her future imprisonment, as her oppressive father implies: ‘We’ll see if a strong fort can hold you now’ (I.ii.216). Middleton also indicates how a woman can be reduced to a mere breeding vessel by staging a mock marriage between Aurelia and Dondolo, Lactantio’s runaway servant. Contrary to Dondolo’s expectation, the community of gypsies is neither liberal nor anarchic, but as systematic and relentless as the Duchess’s court, where male authorities press the Duchess with the issue of succession. Immediately after the mock marriage of Dondolo and Aurelia, the Captain of the gypsies commands them:

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 the gypsies, marriage is inseparable from reproduction as a service for ‘the commonwealth’, and Aurelia is prized only for her sexual procreativity. The predicament of the Page, Lactantio’s former lover, also brings about the audience’s disillusionment about marriage. Deceived by Lactantio’s false promise of marriage, the Page has been dressed in male attire to serve her faithless lover sexually and is now pregnant. As many critics have observed, Middleton’s representation of the Page’s
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pregnant body is highly disturbing. Her grotesque dance and subsequent childbirth on the stage clearly undermine the positive image of women’s fertility.

Middleton’s sceptical view of both Catholic veneration of chastity and Protestant celebration of fruitful marriage leads the play to an ambiguous ending. As various critics maintain, although Middleton follows the convention of romantic comedy by producing two marital couples, their marriages are far from propitious. Andrugio marries 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 of chastity 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’. In fact, it might even appear that her vow has finally been taken for reasons 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.200-04)

However, it is questionable what more the Duchess can expect from the Catholic Church, whose authority has been diminished irrevocably by the Cardinal’s hypocrisy and opportunism. The Duchess’s decision to confine herself in ‘some religious sanctuary’ rather appears as a reflection of her weariness with her society, which is revealed as full of dissemblers and

96 Geller, p. 305.
covetous people who try to exploit her body and wealth for their own interest.  

Overall, the denouement of *More Dissemblers* gives an impression that everything has returned to its original place after a circuit: the lovers return to their original partners and the Duchess returns to her seclusion. The play also returns to the Duchess’s court after the temporary dream of freedom in the community of the gypsies is dismissed. However, the original place is no longer the same place as before, after people’s weakness, corruption, and hypocrisy have been relentlessly exposed. Importantly, Middleton does not simply make his play a satire on Catholic Italy. It is notable that the Duchess’s final comment on her society, ‘[w]e all have faults’ (V.ii.227), somewhat overlaps with the Calvinistic notion of total depravity, which formulates human beings as ‘wholly vitiated by sin’ and incapable ‘to will or perform any good unaided’ by God. By dramatizing the issue 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.

**B. The Un-Lusty Widow’s Will in *The Widow***

After *More Dissemblers*, Middleton assigned a challenging task to himself by naming his next play *The Widow*. By the time Middleton wrote the play, the widow-hunt plot had already become stock in early modern theatres, and the audience would expect a story about a wealthy widow conquered by a virile, prodigal youth just by hearing its title. Middleton’s task was two-fold. On one hand, he had to follow the basic plot of the ‘lusty widow’ trope to satisfy the audience’s desire for this popular motif. On the other hand, he had to diverge from this familiar plot to confound the audience’s expectation and make his play fresh and enjoyable. According to Panek, *The Widow* is one of

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the ‘most neglected’ plays about widows, and this can be explained by modern critics’ uneasiness about its denouement, in which Middleton self-consciously victimizes the virtuous widow by marrying her to a worthless man, in order to satirize the audience’s expectation for such a typical ending of the ‘lusty widow’ trope. I will challenge such readings by discussing how Middleton’s rewriting of the ‘lusty widow’ trope emancipates, instead of victimizing, Valeria by enabling her to satisfy her own ‘will’.

Apart from the play’s title, Middleton’s intention to rewrite the theatrical convention of the ‘lusty widow’ trope is also evinced by his metatheatrical references. At the beginning of The Widow, Ricardo, a suitor to Valeria, boasts about his courting of the wealthy widow to his friends, Francisco and Attilio. Francisco, by contrast, laments his hopeless love for Philippa, the young wife of an old Justice of the Peace, Brandino. Ricardo and Francisco then start role-playing women against each other. While Ricardo reveals Philippa’s sensuality by playing an easy woman, Francisco plays a scornful woman and provokes Ricardo. Losing the distinction between reality and fiction, Richard tries to conquer his scornful ‘widow’ by sexual assault:

Ricardo. Tell me as you’re a woman, lady, what
Serve kisses for? But to stop all your mouths.
[He makes to kiss Francisco]

Francisco. Hold, hold, Ricardo!

Ricardo. Disgrace me, widow?
[Ricardo throws Francisco down]

Francisco. Art mad? I’m Francisco.

Attilio. Signor Ricardo, up, up! (I.ii.135-40)

Ricardo here reproduces a typical storyline of ‘lusty widow’ plays. Although widows might appear scornful, they are actually desperate for sex and subdued easily by virile youths. Middleton’s reference to Field’s Amends for

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100 Panek, p. 183.
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*Ladies* (1610-11) also reminds the audience of this basic plot. When Philippa ponders how to keep Ansaldo, to whom she is attracted but who is actually a woman in male disguise, in her house without being recognized by her husband, she recalls the following story:

A gentleman, that for a lady’s love
Was thought six months her woman, tended on her
In her own garments, and (she being a widow)
Lay night by night with her in way of comfort;
Marry, in conclusion match they did together. (V.i.88-92)

In Field’s play, Bould disguises himself as a maid and tries to assault Lady Bright, while they are sleeping together in the same bed. However, Lady Bright escapes danger by kicking out the naked man from her house. Although the widow and her ‘bold’ suitor eventually marry, Middleton rewrites the story to insinuate the widow’s secret ‘comfort’ with her manly maid.

Ricardo tries to win Valeria by conforming himself to the typical image of a virile, prodigal suitor. He has sold his lands and is now indebted to one of the aged suitors to Valeria. He boasts about his sexual experiences with ‘[a] thousand’ women, half of whom are adulterous wives (I.ii.59-61). He believes that Valeria, being a widow, is more interested in his phallic ‘thing’ than his financial state: ‘Dost think, i’faith / I come to a rich widow with no thing?’ (I.ii.31-32). Even after Ricardo and Francisco have finished their role-playing, Ricardo is not completely awake from his ‘fairest dream’ (I.ii.144). He tells Francisco as they get up from the ground:

[…] I am like the actor that you spoke on:
I must have the part that overcomes the lady,
I never like the play else. (I.ii.148-50)

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Ricardo’s speech is intriguing in two ways. First, it implies that the actor of Ricardo was probably accustomed to play ‘the part that overcomes the lady’, including widows. As Warren and Taylor maintain, it is likely that the actor of Francisco played women until recently. Ricardo claims that he ‘shall laugh’ (I.ii.87) at Francisco without farthingale, and Francisco himself tells Ricardo that he will play ‘the woman; that I’m used to’ (I.ii.111).102 If the actor of Francisco had played a scornful widow against the actor of Ricardo in the past, their enactment of the typical plot of ‘lusty widow’ plays might have struck and amused the audience. Second, Ricardo’s demand for ‘the part that overcomes the lady’ is ironic, because he is not given this role. Rather, it is the widow who eventually ‘overcomes’ this impudent suitor.

Whereas Ricardo represents himself as a typical widow hunter, Valeria refuses to be confined in the stereotypical image of the ‘lusty widow’. Valeria is a unique widow character, who seeks after remarriage openly, but almost never evokes sexuality. Valeria’s virtuous character is clear from her first speech, in which she commands her servant not to admit one of her suitors, whose ‘right worshipful idolatrous face’ is ‘most fearfully painted’ (II.i.5-6):

I’m a woman,
Yet I praise heaven I never had th’ambition
To go about to mend a better workman.
She ever shames herself i’th’ end that does it.
He that likes me not now, as heaven made me,
I will never hazard hell to do him a pleasure,
Nor lie every night like a woodcock in paste
To please some gaudy goose i’th’ morning.
A wise man likes that best that is itself,
Not that which only seems, though it look fairer. (II.i.11-20)

By dismissing the painted courtier whose obsession with appearance betrays his ‘prodigious pride’ (II.i.10) as well as impiety, Valeria distinguishes herself from the Duchess of Milan in More Dissemblers, who is not only

attracted to Andrugio at first sight, but also tries ‘to mend a better workman’ by representing herself as a virtuous widow. While Ricardo rebukes the painted courtier for his effeminacy, Valeria’s hatred toward him derives from her detection of underlying foulness: ‘I might perceive it peel in many places, / And under’s eye lay a betraying foulness’ (II.i.7-8). Valeria’s distrust of appearance also makes her wary of her suitors’ declarations of love:

Heaven send me one that loves me, and I’m happy –
Of whom I’ll make great trial ere I have him,
Though I speak all men fair and promise sweetly. (II.i.21-23)

Her intention is to reveal her suitors’ true purposes and to marry the one who loves her sincerely.

By declaring her intention to choose her new husband carefully and discreetly, Valeria reveals that Ricardo’s assumption about the widow’s blindness is utterly mistaken. It is notable that Ricardo associates Valeria with Fortune repeatedly in his conversation with Francisco and Attilio. He explains his prospect of marriage to Valeria to his dubious friends as follows:

It was the naturalest courtesy that ever was ordained: a young gentleman being spent, to have a rich widow set him up again. To see how Fortune has provided for all mortality’s ruins: your college for your old standing scholar, your hospital for your lame creeping soldier, your bawd for your mangled roarer, your open house for your beggar, and your widow for your gentleman. (I.ii.1-8)

The image of ‘a young gentleman being spent’ and ‘set […] up again’ by a wealthy widow is clearly a double entendre, implying the prodigal’s sexual arousal as well as financial recovery. Ricardo refers to the same goddess as he explains why Valeria keeps an amicable attitude toward all of her suitors, including a wasted gentleman like himself:

She knows not yet
Where fortune may bestow her; she’s her gift;
Therefore to all will show a kind respect. (I.ii.44-46)
In these speeches, Ricardo follows the literary convention which describes a widow as Fortune’s gift. In early modern literature, Fortune is generally associated with blindness and changeability, and widows are often described as her gifts, because they are considered to provide wealth and social advancement to worthless men. Interestingly, widows are not only described as Fortune’s gifts, but also compared to Fortune herself. These images are often conflated in early modern plays. For instance, in Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears* (1603-5), Tharsalio’s assertion that Eudora ‘has taken note of my spirit, and surveyed my good parts’ (I.i.75-76) is ridiculed by Lysander as follows: ‘All this savours of the blind goddess you speak of’ (I.i.79). To this, Tharsalio answers: ‘Such fair attempts led by a brave resolve are evermore seconded by Fortune’ (I.i.84-85). Tharsalio is indeed ‘seconded by Fortune’ because Eudora falls in love with this prodigal youth and bestows all that ‘savours of the blind goddess’ on him.

It is unsurprising that widows are often conflated with Fortune, considering that their remarriage is often attributed to their wilfulness. As I mentioned in Chapter Three in relation to *Hamlet*, widows’ ‘will’ can signify both sexual desire and self-determination in early modern plays. Like the blind goddess, widows are driven by their will or uncontrollable desire, and bestow their fortune, namely their fate and wealth, on prodigal youths. While widows’ ‘will’ appears felicitous for their mercenary suitors, it is often in tension with the will of their deceased husbands, whose wills or testaments entitle their widows to inheritance. It is ironic that the husband’s will to leave his property to his widow so that she could sustain herself without male protection made her an attractive commodity in the early modern marriage market. The fact that a widow could easily cancel out her husband’s will by exercising her own will to remarry and transferring his willed property – including herself – to her suitor, who replaces her husband by satisfying her ‘will’ or sexual desire highlights the formidable power of widows’ ‘will’, which also turns out to be menacing for their suitors in *The Widow*, as I will discuss shortly.

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104 Hanson, p. 225.
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Ricardo’s speeches quoted above indicate that he is aware of this slippage between the two images of a widow as Fortune’s gift and Fortune herself. It is notable that what he claims to be provided by Fortune’s supernatural power – college, hospital, brothel, or alms-house – are all human institutions. While some of these institutions are provided by charity, some are established for the pursuit of mutual profit: while the bawd gets money, the roaring boy gets sexual pleasure. This is how Ricardo perceives the relationship between the widow and the suitor. The widow exercises her ‘will’ and offers her fortune to the suitor, who in return satisfies the widow’s ‘will’ by providing her with sexual pleasure. As Warren and Taylor note, the very expression ‘naturalest courtesy’ is an oxymoron because courtesy is a human act of generosity by contrast to nature. Therefore, when Ricardo calls Valeria ‘her gift’, his meaning is that the widow is a gift of Fortune as well as the widow herself.

Middleton plays with these various meanings of widows’ ‘will’ in the scene of Ricardo’s entrapment of Valeria. It is unsurprising that Ricardo, a self-consciously virile suitor, works upon Valeria’s ‘will’ in order to obtain ‘the kind proof’ (I.i.158) of her inclination to marry him. When Valeria mentions his debt to the Second Suitor, Ricardo presses her to marry him and clear off his debt:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ricardo. & \quad \text{Why, i’faith, you may, an you will.} \\
Valeria. & \quad \text{I know that, sir.} \\
Ricardo. & \quad \text{Troth, and I would have my will then, if I were as you.} \\
& \quad \text{There’s few women else but has.} \\
Valeria. & \quad \text{But since I cannot have’t in all, signor,} \\
& \quad \text{I care not to have’t in anything.} \\
Ricardo. & \quad \text{Why, you may have’t in all, an you will, widow.} \\
Valeria. & \quad \text{Pish! I would have one that loves me for myself, sir,} \\
& \quad \text{Not for my wealth – and that I cannot have. (II.i.63-71)}
\end{align*}
\]

As Panek points out, it is interesting how Ricardo urges Valeria to marry him by evoking the widow’s ‘will’ repeatedly: Valeria can have her ‘will’ if she

\[105 \text{Middleton, } \text{The Widow}, \text{ eds. Warren and Taylor, in } \text{Works}, \text{ p. 1084.}\]
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‘wills’ to take him.\textsuperscript{106} However, Valeria rejects Ricardo’s suit, because she cannot have her ‘will’ until she finds someone who loves her for herself, not for her wealth. Ricardo changes his strategy and starts another role-playing:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ricardo.} \quad \text{What say you to him that does the thing you wish for?}
\textit{Valeria.} \quad \text{Why, here’s my hand, I’ll marry none but him then.}
\textit{Ricardo.} \quad \text{Your hand and faith?}
\textit{Valeria.} \quad \text{My hand and faith.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[They clasp hands]
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ricardo.} \quad \text{’Tis I, then.}
\textit{Valeria.} \quad \text{I shall be glad on’t, trust me; ’shrew my heart, else.}
\end{quote}

(II.i.72-75)

Then Francisco and Attilio, who have been standing on the stage ‘unseen’ (II.i.58 s.d.), come forward and reveal themselves as witnesses to the match between Ricardo and Valeria. Ricardo’s trick on the widow is interesting, because it resembles how widows entrap men whom they desire in \textit{Malfi} and \textit{More Dissemblers}. While the Duchess of Malfi turns Antonio’s ambiguous statement (‘I will remain the constant sanctuary / Of your good name’ (I.i.460-61)) into his consent to marriage by kissing him and revealing Cariola as a witness, the Duchess of Milan employs role-playing like Ricardo by making Andrugio read a forged love letter and responding to his ‘courtship’ positively. If suitors try to conquer widows by sexual assaults, widows entrap men into their ‘willing’ professions of love. Ricardo reverses this formula by insisting on Valeria’s ‘hand and faith’ instead of using his sexual potency. However, Ricardo’s attempt to work upon Valeria’s ‘will’ backfires and provokes another ‘will’ of the widow, that is, self-assertiveness:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Valeria:} \quad \text{Sir, take your course.}
\textit{Ricardo:} \quad \text{With all my heart: ten courses, an you will, widow.}
\textit{Valeria:} \quad \text{Sir, sir, I’m not so gamesome as you think me.}
\text{I’ll stand you out by law. (II.i.86-89)}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{106} Panek, pp. 192-93.
As Warren and Taylor note, ‘courses’ refer to both ‘courses of a meal’ and ‘sexual bouts’. While Ricardo appropriates Valeria’s dismissive speech to make another bawdy joke about the widow’s ‘will’, Valeria rebuffs such a ‘gamesome’ reference by using the same term to express her determination to fight against his trickery: ‘I will consume myself to the last stamp / Before thou get’st me’ (II.i.92-93; emphasis mine). It is clear that Valeria is not Ricardo’s ‘most affable’ (I.i.156) widow who passively waits for Fortune to decide where to ‘bestow her’. Rather, as Ricardo now realizes, she is a ‘wilful’ widow (II.i.93). It is ironical that Ricardo who has been referring to the widow’s will repeatedly forgets that the most notorious characteristic of widows is their wilfulness. Instead of using her ‘will’ to marry him and satisfy her ‘will’, Valeria employs her ‘will’ to deny her unwilling marriage to Ricardo.

Valeria’s exchange with Ricardo also reveals a unique predicament of this widow character. As already quoted, when Ricardo argues that Valeria can have her ‘will’ in everything, she retorts: ‘Pish! I would have one that loves me for myself, sir, / Not for my wealth – and that I cannot have’. ‘[T]hat’ in the second sentence refers to both Valeria’s will and the man who loves her for herself. It is not a coincidence that these two things overlap, because they together explain why Valeria’s pursuit of remarriage proves difficult. As Panek maintains, Middleton successfully created an ‘unusually un-lusty widow’ character, whose lack of sensuality contradicts the general perception about widows’ sexuality in early modern plays. On the other hand, Valeria’s ‘un-lustiness’ complicates her search for a new husband, because she cannot love or desire anyone until someone loves her sincerely. The only thing Valeria desires from men is true love, uncorrupted by monetary or sexual desires. However, Middleton’s unromantic world fails to provide this. If, as Panek claims, Valeria does not show ‘the smallest admission of love, lust, or even attraction’ toward Ricardo, Ricardo’s love for Valeria is hard to recognize because he readily conflates it with his monetary and sexual desires. The following exchange reveals their different perceptions about the relationship between love and money:

108 Panek, p. 183.
109 Panek, p. 183.
Valeria. Am I betrayed to this then? Then I see
'Tis for my wealth. A woman’s wealth’s her traitor.

Ricardo. 'Tis for love chiefly, I protest, sweet widow,
I count wealth but a fiddle to make us merry.

(II.i.81-84)

For Valeria, her suitors are interested in either her person or wealth, and these desires are incompatible. If one seeks after her wealth, his profession of love must be a cover for his mercenary purpose. For Ricardo, it is completely reasonable to court a woman ‘for love chiefly’, while seeking after her wealth. Ricardo expresses the same idea when he is asked about his love for Valeria earlier in the play:

Francisco. But do you love her?
And then ’twill prosper.

Ricardo. By this hand, I do –
Not for her wealth, but for her person too. (I.ii.160-62)

As Warren and Taylor note, Ricardo’s answer is ambivalent. While denying his mercenary purpose, Ricardo admits that Valeria’s wealth is part of her attraction by adding ‘too’.110 If Ricardo’s ‘love’ for Valeria is confounded with his desire for her wealth, it is also intermingled with his sexual desire. In the same scene, Ricardo describes Valeria’s generosity as follows:

And, as at a sheriff’s table – O, blest custom! –
A poor indebted gentleman may dine,
Feed well, and without fear, and depart so,
So to her lips fearless I come and go. (I.ii.48-51)

For Ricardo, Valeria’s ‘lips’ are equivalent to the delicacies on her rich table. Valeria is not only financially capable of feeding him, but also has a potential to satisfy his sexual desire.

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This mixed nature of Ricardo’s ‘love’ for Valeria is also highlighted in the court scene, where Valeria sues Ricardo for fraud and asks for the invalidation of their marriage. Before the trial, Valeria requests Brandino, the Justice of the Peace and her brother-in-law, to discuss with Ricardo two proposals for reconciliation. In the first proposal, Valeria offers to provide Ricardo with “a thousand dollars” – / If he will vanish, and let fall the suit’ (IV.i.86-87). However, when Brandino speaks to Ricardo, Ricardo rejects this ‘good round sum’ (IV.i.98) by claiming:

A good round widow’s better.
There’s meat and money too. I have been bought
Out of my lands and yielded, but (sir) scorn
To be bought out of my affection. (IV.i.98-101)

Again, Ricardo conflates his sexual desire with his appetite for food by calling Valeria ‘meat’. It is notable that Ricardo juxtaposes ‘meat’, ‘money’, and ‘affection’ to explain his interest in Valeria. There are two interpretations. If ‘affection’ means love, Ricardo argues that sex, money, and love are all equally important in his courting of Valeria. If ‘affection’ simply refers back to his desire for Valeria’s ‘meat and money’, love is either non-existent or equivalent to his monetary and sexual desires. Ricardo’s response to Valeria’s second proposal confirms that the first interpretation is tenable, although it does not expound the nature of Ricardo’s ‘love’ for Valeria completely. After Ricardo’s ‘strange’ (IV.i.111) rejection of the first proposal, Valeria asks Brandino to urge him to marry her sister’s maid, Violetta. Again, Brandino speaks to Ricardo:

This gentlewoman – my charge, left by her friends,
Whom for her person and her portion
I could bestow most richly; but in pity
To her affection, which lies bent at you, sir,
I am content to yield to her desire.

... I bring you flesh and money, a rich heir
And a maid too – and that’s a thing worth thanks, sir;
Like Ricardo, Brandino here conflates Violetta’s ‘affection’, ‘desire’, and ‘love’, and Ricardo unravels this by asking specifically about Violetta’s love: ‘Do you love me, forsooth?’ (IV.i.129). However, Violetta’s claim that she has fallen in love with Ricardo by watching him ‘[t]wirling your band-string’ (IV.i.137) reveals the superficiality of her love as well as her character, which makes a clear contrast with Valeria’s distrust of appearances and careful scrutiny of men’s interiority. Despite the fact that Violette can bring him money and perhaps a greater sexual satisfaction, Ricardo rejects her in favour of Valeria. Middleton at least suggests that Ricardo’s earlier claim that his courting of Valeria is ‘for love chiefly’ is possibly true, although he leaves it ultimately inconclusive.

Valeria also starts to recognize the practical side of marriage as a financial settlement after Ricardo’s entrapment of her. When the First Suitor proposes to assist her lawsuit against Ricardo, Valeria subtly remarks:

Valeria.    I’ll bear the charge most willingly.
First Suitor. Not a penny. Thy love will reward me.
Valeria.    And where love must be, It is all but one purse, now I think on’t.
First Suitor. All comes to one, sweet widow. (II.i.153-57)

Valeria’s observation proves right, because the First Suitor eventually reveals that the ‘reward’ he expects from Valeria is more financial than emotional. The Second Suitor also increases Valeria’s distrust of men’s professed love by withdrawing his courtship and starting to support Ricardo’s marriage to her, in order to collect debts from this prodigal. Valeria laments: ‘Are all the world betrayers?’ (II.i.190). As in More Dissemblers, Middleton refuses to romanticize marriage as a consummation of true love in The Widow. For instance, the First Suitor speaks of marriage as follows:

[…] there’s two words to a bargain ever
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All the world over, and if love be one
I’m sure money’s the other. (V.i.316-18)

And money is often more important than love. In Middleton’s unromantic, materialistic world, Valeria’s desire for a man who loves her for herself and not for her wealth is almost unattainable.

However, Panek’s and other critics’ arguments that Valeria is victimized by the convention of the ‘lusty widow’ trope by being forced into ‘a thoroughly dubious match’ with ‘a thoroughly mercenary and unethical young man’ do not necessarily agree with the impression given by the play’s ending. 111 If Middleton follows the convention by marrying the wealthy widow to the prodigal youth, he also enables the widow to become a moral centre and exercise her wit to retaliate against her ‘betrayers’ and have her own ‘will’. After Valeria has ‘overthrown’ (V.i.273) Ricardo in the trial, she ‘make[s] great trial’ of her suitors as she has promised earlier in the play. She pretends to have transmitted all of her property to Brandino, and urges each suitor to take her. While the First and Second Suitors reject the supposedly penniless widow and reveal their pledges of love as false, Ricardo takes Valeria by claiming that he ‘swore too much / To be believed so little’ (V.i.335-36):

Ricardo. Welcome, blessing,
Are you mine faithfully now?
Valeria. As love can make one.

(V.i.337-38)

Admittedly, the exchange of love between Ricardo and Valeria is brief and unenthusiastic, although the fact that Ricardo regrets having sworn his love ‘too much’ leaves the possibility that their exchange of love, however brief, is not necessarily void of true affection. Interestingly, Ricardo’s and Valeria’s unimpressive exchange of love is immediately taken over by Valeria’s practical concern about their financial predicaments:

You’re in debt; and I, in doubt of all, 
Left myself nothing too. We must not hold; 
Want on both sides makes all affection cold. (V.i.342-44)

While testing Ricardo’s affection further, Valeria’s speech also indicates that she has accepted the practical side of marriage as a financial settlement; she now cherishes the ‘two words of a bargain’ called marriage, that is, love and money, equally. This change in Valeria’s notion of marriage does not necessarily reflect her disillusionment about marriage or the loss of her innocence, because such pragmatism has always been a part of her nature as a widow. After her speech quoted above, Valeria and Ricardo both recover their own properties. While Ricardo’s debt is resolved when he snatches his bonds from the Second Suitor and tears them, Valeria recovers her property by revealing that the document she has passed to Brandino is not ‘the deed of gift’ (V.i.379), but ‘a deed in trust’ (V.i.381), which transfers the ownership of property only temporarily.\(^\text{112}\) It is noteworthy that Valeria has ‘bobbed’ (V.i.381) not only her mercenary suitors, but also Brandino, the Justice of the Peace, by manipulating these legal documents. This becomes interesting when we recall how Valeria has secured the First Suitor’s financial support for her lawsuit against Ricardo by lamenting as follows: ‘I’m but a woman / And, alas, ignorant in law businesses’ (II.i.152-53). On the contrary, Valeria reveals herself as an expert in ‘law businesses’ who knows how to protect and control her property without men’s help. Despite the fact that Valeria repeatedly compares herself to ‘[p]oor simple-dealing women’ (II.i.38, 109) before her suitors, she is actually an independent, tactical, litigious widow.

That Valeria accepts marriage to Ricardo by giving him ‘the deed of gift’ reminds us of Ricardo’s earlier speech, which compares the widow to Fortune’s gift and the blind goddess herself: ‘She knows not yet / Where fortune may bestow her; she’s her gift’. Valeria, whose distrust of appearance contradicts the stereotypical image of the widow’s/Fortune’s blindness, finally ‘knows’ where to ‘bestow her’. As already discussed, Ricardo is not a romantic lover, whose love for the widow is a mixture of desires for her

person, body, and wealth. Still, it is only Ricardo who passes Valeria’s ‘great trial’ by accepting the widow without a prospect of wealth. Although, as Jacobs claims, this can simply be taken as a dramatic necessity to bring about the prodigal’s advantageous marriage to the wealthy widow, Middleton at least represents Ricardo as ‘the best bargain’ (IV.i.40) Valeria can make in this unromantic, materialistic world. Before the ‘great trial’ of her suitors, Valeria repeats the same phrase as she speaks at the beginning of the play: ‘I must take one that loves me for myself’ (V.i.305). Finally, the ‘un-lusty’ widow has her own ‘will’.

In this chapter, I discussed three plays acted by the King’s Men in the mid-1610s, or what I call ‘the period of romance’, which followed ‘the period of satire’ discussed in Chapter Three. In the first part, I examined Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi, and considered how widows’ and boy actors’ gender ambiguity and other forms of liminality might have overlapped on the early modern stage by focusing on one boy actor, who might have played the Duchess in the first production. In the second part, I discussed Middleton’s two comedies, which were possibly influenced by Malfi. After examining how Middleton uses the stage balcony and other stage features to demystify the Duchess’s vow of chastity in More Dissemblers, I considered how he rewrites the theatrical conventions of the ‘lusty widow’ trope in The Widow by highlighting metatheatrical references and the issue of widows’ ‘will’.

While continuing the conventional images of widows’ sensuality and willfulness, Webster and Middleton re-interpret these images positively. These playwrights not only represent widows as protagonists, but also give them much more voice and intelligence, which enable them to acquire the audience’s sympathy. This is a notable change from the earlier theatrical representations of widows, which seldom represent them as protagonists or characters deserving the audience’s sympathy. By representing widows almost like romantic heroines, Webster and Middleton articulate their favourable views on widows’ remarriage, as well as on their autonomy to some extent. Their sympathetic treatment of widows’ remarriage is continued by Caroline playwrights, although the Caroline representation of widows’

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113 Jacobs, p. 141.
autonomy is much more problematic than their predecessors’, as I will discuss in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five

‘Shall I not be master of my own house?’: Widows as Formidable Mistresses in Caroline Drama

After the ‘period of romance’ in the mid-1610s, the popularity of the widow-hunt plot waned briefly. Late Jacobean plays generally represent widows as middle-aged or older women, who are often mothers of grown-up children. Although widows’ sexuality is problematized in Fletcher and Massinger’s *Thierry and Theodoret* (1613-21) and Middleton’s *Women, Beware Women* (1621), only a few widows have suitors or enter remarriage (W. R., *A Match at Midnight* (1621-23); Drue, *The Duchess of Suffolk* (1624)), and remarriage often appears as a mere dramatic convenience to realize the comic ending (Fletcher, *The Queen of Corinth* (1616-c.1618); Webster, *The Devil’s Law-Case* (1617-19)).

Caroline drama represented widows almost as frequently as Jacobean drama (see Appendix), and many conventional images or character types of widows were revisited, including the ungovernable widow-bride (Brome, *The Northern Lass* (1629) and *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (1635-39)) and the hypocritical lamenting widow (Shirley, *Love Tricks* (1625)). The motif of the widow-hunt also reappeared, most crudely in Cokain’s *The Obstinate Lady* (c. 1630-42) and Sir William Davenant’s *Love and Honour* (1634). However, these character types and motifs did not stay the same as constructed by Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. Caroline stage widows 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 society of Mediterranean countries. These widows enjoy their authority as mistresses

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1 *The Northern Lass*, II.i.369.
2 For detailed discussions of these plays, see James, ‘Jacobean Drama’.
3 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*, eds. Adam Zucker and Alan B. Farmer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 183-211 (pp. 184-85); Martin Butler,
of their households and entertain various guests including their suitors. Their openness toward these visitors is rarely associated with lechery, but praised as an indication of their hospitality and appropriate manners. Some widows are extremely young and almost virgin, reflecting the Caroline idealization of female chastity.

As already discussed in the Introduction, the representation of widows in Caroline drama has mostly been neglected by critics. Although Clark and Panek mention a few plays, their thematic approach fails to account for the differences between Jacobean and Caroline representations of widows. Even MacDonald, who uniquely considers both Jacobean and Caroline representations of widows, does not distinguish between these periods: ‘Although the plays on which the study is based span a period of nearly forty years, they are generally consistent, both in terms of themes with which they deal, and in their attitudes toward the widow’. Although Caroline playwrights certainly continued many conventions, they did not simply imitate or reiterate the themes of their Elizabethan and Jacobean predecessors. As James Bulman maintains as he describes Caroline drama in general, ‘however much Caroline playwrights were indebted to earlier drama, they adapted it to a new context and dramatized issues of immediate social and political concern. By doing so, they found voices of their own’.

My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate how the Caroline representation of widows reflects the theatrical and socio-political contexts unique to this period. I owe my interest in these contexts to various critics. While Dorothy M. Farr has stressed the importance of reading Caroline plays in relation to their original venues, many critics have followed Martin Butler’s ground-breaking study, *Theatre and Crisis* (1984), and highlighted the complexity of political views reflected in Caroline drama. In this chapter, I


*Clark, Comedy, Youth, Manhood*, ch. 4; Panek, pp. 151-54.

*MacDonald, p. 7.*


*Dorothy M. Farr, John Ford and the Caroline Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1979). For instance, see Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in*
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will first focus on the increasing number of detailed descriptions of widows’ households in Caroline plays and discuss how these descriptions indicate widows’ social and economic status as well as their authority as mistresses of their households. Then, in the second part of this chapter, I will consider the ambiguous representation of widow-mistresses in Brome’s plays in relation to contemporary anxieties over Henrietta Maria’s cultural influence as a powerful Catholic consort.

1. The Representation of Widows’ Households in Caroline Drama

A. Theatrical Background

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. 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 so not under the control of the City Fathers, the Phoenix and the Salisbury Court theatres were outside of 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 on Bankside as well as the Blackfriars. According to Butler and Bulman, Caroline theatres saw many

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fewer new plays than 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 repertoires. 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 had become 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. Interestingly, these ‘wits’ – 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, but 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. Although plays by courtier poets were by no means void of political criticism, it was plays by professional writers which took more ambiguous attitudes toward the monarch, and interestingly, represented widows repeatedly.

The pre-eminence of hall theatres may explain why there are many detailed descriptions of widows’ households in Caroline plays. Although we should not forget that both amphitheatres and hall theatres employed a wide range of props in the early modern period, there is an observable correlation between the emergence of hall theatres and the increasing number of detailed descriptions of widows’ households. Such descriptions are rare in Elizabethan plays. Apart from the inventory of household/business items in Mistress Quickly’s tavern in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part 2* (1596-1600), which I discussed in Chapter Two, Robert Greene’s *The Scottish History of James IV* (1588-92) uniquely gives a glimpse of the widow’s kitchen as she serves ‘the

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best Ale in al Scotland’ (II.i.183) to her visitor and welcomes his request for ‘some of your rosted Capons or beefe’ (II.i.202). Similar descriptions appear more frequently in Jacobean plays, especially in those performed at indoor theatres. Marston and others’ The Insatiate Countess (1608-13), 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 (1612-14), staged at the Blackfriars, also mentions many small objects in the widow’s household. It is notable that 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). Similarly, 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, detailed descriptions of widows’ households do not appear exclusively in plays performed at hall theatres. In Fletcher’s Wit without Money (1614-15), 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 at a hall theatre: his collaborative work with Massinger, The Custom of the Country (1619-20), 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:

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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. While Rutilio ‘lift[s] up these hangings’ (II.iv.46) to hide himself in the discovery space, the description of rich adornment ‘glistring’ through darkness agrees with the condition of the Blackfriars, whose uses of candles probably created such visual effects. The early modern audience would have deduced the widow’s social and economic standing from the objects displayed on the stage as well as Rutilio’s description. It seems not unlikely that the emergence of hall theatres increased the number of detailed descriptions of widows’ households and depictions using props by providing a closer proximity between the stage and the audience. That the audience could see objects on the stage more closely would have aroused their interest in the design, material, or values of these items.

Such 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 of court performance, the hall theatre companies had strong connections to the royal family and the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert. This might have enabled these companies to acquire props of higher values and represent wealthy households more realistically. For instance, Gurr relates two episodes which evince how much a royal or courtly personage who is 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

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King’s Men so that they could act it for her in London’. Though grudgingly, Laud consented.\textsuperscript{17} In another episode, Suckling bestowed ‘eight or ten Suits of new Cloaths’ upon the King’s Men following his productions of \textit{Aglaura} (1638) at court and the Blackfriars, for which he spent ‘three or four hundred Pounds’.\textsuperscript{18} According to a contemporary witness, these costumes were ‘very rich; no tinsell, all the lace pure gold and silver’.\textsuperscript{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 benefit materially from their connection to the court. Also the fact that some hall theatre companies shared a commercial interest with the authorities makes such material supply plausible. For instance, when Gunnell opened the Salisbury Court theatre, his co-financier William Blagrave was a deputy of Henry Herbert in the Revels Office from 1624.\textsuperscript{20} A contemporary account ‘implies that Gunnell’s lease of the property from the earl of Dorset had Herbert’s approval’.\textsuperscript{21} Moreover, the earl of Dorset, the queen’s chamberlain, who leased his estate to Gunnell and Blagrave was apparently in want and eager for the theatre’s success.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{The New Inn} (1629), who gives her dress

\textsuperscript{17} Gurr, \textit{Playing Companies}, pp. 381-82.
\textsuperscript{18} The Earl of Strafford, qtd. in Gurr, \textit{Playing Companies}, p. 384.
\textsuperscript{20} Gurr, \textit{Playing Companies}, p. 430.
\textsuperscript{22} Berry, p. 649.
\textsuperscript{23} Gurr, \textit{Playing Companies}, p. 347.
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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

It is often argued that the development of parks, pleasure gardens, and other recreational spots in the late Jacobean and Caroline periods 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

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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 stuff.

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 for 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’. 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.

It is therefore likely that the wealthy audience at the Caroline hall theatres were not simply interested in the interior of the household, but also were connoisseurs of household items, who could estimate the values 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 performance was their desire to see and experience the same entertainment as the king and queen. 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 of seeing something fabulous and spectacular on the stage. Indeed, as Farr argues, the elite audience, who ‘knew all about the masques at Court and in noble houses whether they had witnessed an actual performance or not’, possibly came to commercial theatres with such expectations. Although the early modern audience was surely accustomed to the symbolic stage and could easily complement the material deficiency of

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28 Howard, p. 185.
31 Farr, p. 5.
the stage with their imagination, this does not necessarily exclude the possibility that early modern theatres pursued realism to some extent. The proximity between the audience and the stage, the connection between the court and the hall theatre companies, and the elite audience’s interest in the interior of the household would all have encouraged Caroline playwrights to give more details about widows’ households.

B. 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. 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. While this indicates that many widows were mistresses of their households from the Elizabethan period, there is conflicting evidence of Caroline attitudes toward widow-mistresses. Like plays, Caroline non-dramatic texts continued many conventional images of widows from Elizabethan and Jacobean predecessors. Richard Brathwait’s The English Gentlewoman (1631) praises virtuous widowhood and encourages widows to dedicate themselves to prayer and religious activities. Wye Saltonstall’s Picturae loquentes (1631) and Jeremy Taylor’s A Juniper Lecture (1639) represent the stereotype of the lusty widow, who tyrannizes over her suitors or usurps authority from her new husband. On the other hand, Edgar’s The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights (1632) takes an almost unprecedented view on widows’ autonomy. While

32 Erickson, p. 178.
35 Kehler, Shakespeare’s Widows, p. 9; Oakes, pp. 11-12.
encouraging widows to remain celibate, Edgar’s reasoning is completely
distinct from that of writers who uphold widows’ everlasting submission to
their husbands:

Why mourne you so, you that be widowes? Consider how long you
have bee in subjection under the predominance of parents, of your
husbands, now you be free in libertie, & free proprii iuris at your owne
Law […] That maidens and wives vowes made upon their soules to
the Lord himselfe of heaven and earth, were all disavowable and
infrangible, by their parents or husbands […] But the vow of a widow
[…] no man had power to disallow of, for her estate was free from
controlment.\footnote{Edgar, p. 232.}

Edgar here repeats Moses’s speech about taking a vow (Numbers 30).
Although, as I discussed in Chapter Four, Catholic widows often took vows
of chastity, Edgar’s emphasis is clearly not on widows’ chastity, but on their
freedom to take vows or make their own decisions about their lives. As Edgar
expounds, proprii iuris means ‘according to (your) own law’ in Latin.\footnote{Maria Kanellou, a former Honorary Research Fellow of the Department of Greek and Latin, UCL, private email correspondence, 14 July 2016.}

While stressing the peculiarity of widows’ status, his view of their autonomy
is almost certainly favourable. It is also notable that he discourages widows’
remarriage by giving an example of a wealthy widow who was impoverished
by her spendthrift husband: ‘the bags were all empty, the plate was all at
pawne’.\footnote{Edgar, p. 332.} Edgar’s admonition against remarriage does not come from his
preference of chastity, but from his concern about widows’ forfeiture of their
rights to possess and control their own properties. Although it is unclear to
what extent we may perceive his view as representative of Caroline attitudes,
Edgar’s positive statement seems to reflect the general interest in widows’
autonomy, including their authority as mistresses of their households.

How did widows’ households look in the Caroline period? Here I try
to reconstruct the interiors of Caroline widows’ households by using currently
available sources, namely wills in the custody of the Registry of Durham and

\footnote{Edgar, p. 232.}
Erickson’s study of wills and inventories in Lincolnshire, Sussex, and other counties. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the term ‘will’ has various meanings in relation to early modern widows. A widow inherited her husband’s properties 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 properties 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.’ Although Middleton herself was non-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 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 cash’, and much more expensive than pewter or brass. 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

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40 Peck, p. 280.
in England in the latter part of the fifteenth century’, and were ‘seldom made’ after 1680.\textsuperscript{41} 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 totally be 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’.\textsuperscript{42} Apostle spoons are one of such examples, and were continued to be produced, presented as gifts for baptism, and often bequeathed in wills in post-Reformation England.\textsuperscript{43} 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.\textsuperscript{44} 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 bequeaths 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 stoolees all imbroided with silk’. Among these, the chairs and stools ‘all imbroided with silk’ were particularly expensive commodities. Examining inventories produced between 1560 and 1630 in Canterbury and Worcester dioceses, Richardson shows that chairs – especially upholstered ones – were expensive and rare commodities in early modern households.\textsuperscript{45} Middleton’s wealth is also indicated by the fact that she leaves the same number of bedding items to her younger son along with ‘my next featherbed’. To him, she also bequeaths ‘half a dozen silver


\textsuperscript{44} David Marcombe, ‘Gilpin, Bernard (1516-1584)’, \textit{ODNB} [accessed 11 July 2016].

\textsuperscript{45} Richardson, \textit{Material Culture}, pp. 100-01.
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 spoones’. Another half dozen are given to her married daughter, to whom she leaves ‘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’. Apparently, the couple did not have children. Frevile agrees to sell her lands and tenements to eight persons nominated by ‘myne ex[ecut]or or executors’, to whom she also leaves ‘[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 bequeaths many valuables and clothes to her relatives as remembrances of herself. She gives ‘two dozens of my gold buttons’ to her nephew’s wife and ‘my golde chayne’ to his daughter. To her niece, she leaves ‘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 obscure how exactly the ‘border’ looked, it must have been an expensive item, assuming that Frevile bequeathed equally to her nieces. Frevile has another niece to whom she gives ‘my best cooch and cooch horses and all thryre furniture, and my best looking glass’. Frevile also leaves some household stuff to her three nephews: ‘my silver basen and ewer, my gilt saltelter and two guilt bowls’. Richardson has found a striking image of a silver basin and ewer, which I reproduce here:

46 All quotations from Frevile’s will are from Wills, pp. 223-29.
According to Richardson, the basin was usually ‘offered to elite guests during and after a meal, filled with sweetly scented warm rose water’. It indicates Freville’s wealth and also suggests that she might have hosted dinners or banquets at her house. Salt-cellar and bowls are other household items which are often mentioned in early modern wills. Freville also fulfils her role as mistress of her household by providing for her servants. Among these, she bequeaths ‘two kyne and ten ewes’ to one servant’s widow.

Wynifride Midleton, a widow of an esquire, shows great generosity toward a particular loyal servant, Charles Sanderson, and his family in her will dated 26 April 1631. Midleton had a son-in-law and grandchild (her daughter was already dead) and several sisters and their husbands. She knew that her generosity toward Sanderson would arouse disputes among her relatives, especially her sisters, to whom she made bequests on the condition

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48 Richardson, Material Culture, p. 130.
49 Richardson, Domestic Life, p. 91.
50 All quotations from Midleton’s will are from Wills, pp. 232-35.
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 is bequeathed to her son-in-law. Midleton then gives 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 bequeaths ‘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 is her granddaughter, to whom she bequeaths ‘my lesser peece of guilded plate with the cover, one silver 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 endows her clothing as remembrances: ‘a paire of knit stockings’ to her cousin, ‘my whole ryding suit, viz., Cloake, safegarde and Hoode’ to an unidentifed 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 gives ‘Maister Houring’s workes’ to ‘my loveing neighbour and kind frend’. These may be 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. 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. Tokin, another widowed mother of five children, owned a house and household items ‘valued at a total of about £27’ when an

51 Erickson, p. 187.
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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 kimmell (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, each functioning as a dining room, bedroom, and closet, as well as a separate storage space. Erickson considers Tokin’s husband was probably a weaver, for 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 cows and six young ones’ to produce cheese, along with two acres of barley, an acre of peas, and a half acre of oats.52

Although the estates of working-class widows were much humbler than those of the widows of gentry, these wills and inventories teach us three things 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, raising of children, managing 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 properties at their own will. In the next section, I will examine how these points about widows’ households are reflected in Caroline drama.

C. 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

52 Erickson, p. 194.
Richard II (1595-97), 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 (1632-33), 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 properties left by their deceased husbands.

It is notable that Caroline playwrights, unlike their Elizabethan and Jacobean predecessors, not only stress widows’ wealth, but also highlight 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,
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)53

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 as a

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page in disguise, which might have relieved male anxiety over this autonomous widow to some extent, Lady Bird’s speech reveals how wealth would have empowered widows and enabled them to subvert gender hierarchy in the early modern period. 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 properties and servants.\(^{54}\) 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)\(^ {55}\)

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.\(^ {56}\) 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.\(^ {57}\) Hornet, an old usurer, tries to gain Lady Bellamy’s love by demonstrating how he can rule her household ‘with care and thrift’ (p. 453).\(^ {58}\) 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

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\(^{56}\) Ibid, p. 475.
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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 comments 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 values or qualities 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). 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 which could evoke Catholic idolatry, and represented naked bodies – especially 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, and hearing of a sudden alarme in the camp, they made hast to put on their clothes’. 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’

Asuka Kimura (p. 455), claiming that it would warn young gentlemen against prodigality and undermine his usury business. Like Falstaff’s speech to Mistress Quickly in Henry IV, Part 2, which I discussed in Chapter Two, Hornet’s speech highlights the parallel between the biblical story and the ‘lusty widow’ trope. As the Prodigal Son is saved by his benevolent father, the mercenary suitor is rescued by a wealthy widow. 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 rights over property and authority as mistress of her household. 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 rule 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 authority as mistress of her household by drawing up a prenuptial 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’. 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 properties 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* (1629-32), which was probably acted by the King’s Men.\(^{61}\) 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 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.\(^{62}\)

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 One 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 as a page in disguise, who takes revenge on betrayers of his master by revealing their corrupt nature in this manner.

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\(^{61}\) Elizabeth Schafer, ‘*The City Wit*: Critical Introduction’, *RBO*, §22 [accessed 10 July 2016].

\(^{62}\) Jane Ohlmeyer, ‘MacDonnell, Katherine, duchess of Buckingham and marchioness of Antrim (1603?-1649)’, *ODNB* [accessed 10 July 2016]. See also her portrait in Chapter One (fig. 25).

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Shirley’s *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635), acted by Queen Henrietta’s Men at the Cockpit, gives one of the best examples of how Caroline playwrights indicate widows’ autonomy and their social and economic status by giving 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 Rosana 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* (c. 1640-42), Kettreena becomes a widow without consummating her marriage to her jealous husband and remarries King Evaldus, who has always loved her sincerely. 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). It is likely that the figure of the virgin widow, which makes a clear contrast 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 the same age as Henrietta Maria at her arrival in England in June 1625. Celestina is the youngest among widow characters in 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 Neo-Platonic 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. 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 widow-mistress, but also her magnanimity.

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63 Caroline M. Hibbard, ‘Henrietta Maria (1609-1669)’, *ODNB* [accessed 10 July 2016].
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’. 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. Shirley highlights the materialistic desires of these women by stressing ‘the sheer weight of material objects and purchases’ in the first two scenes, each of which focuses on Aretina and Celestina respectively. 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
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 represented 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:

65 Sanders, Cultural Geography, p. 214.
66 Shirley, Lady of Pleasure, ed. Huebert, p. 52.
67 Sanders, Cultural Geography, p. 214.
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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 instance, in Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625), 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’. It is not impossible that Shirley actually made the company 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.

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

\(^{68}\) Dessen and Thomson, p. 161.
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. In his death bed, Isaac blesses his younger son Jacob as follows: ‘God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine’ (Genesis 27:28). Abraham’s servant speaks of his master in a similar manner: ‘the LORD hath blessed my master greatly […] he hath give him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses’ (Genesis 24:35). Although Celestina seems to associate these items with Jewish greediness and dismiss them by calling herself a true Christian, she is revealed as 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 (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 at 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). 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 ‘[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 possibly 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

69 Professor Alison Shell, private email correspondence, 6 January 2016.
70 All quotations from the Bible are from the King James Bible.
71 Shirley, Lady of Pleasure, ed. Huebert, p. 71.
another possible connotation of Celestina’s order for a new set of hangings. It is possible that Celestina is 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 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* explains ‘plush’ as ‘[a] rich fabric of silk, cotton, wool, or other material (or any of these combined), with a long soft nap’. Unfortunately, the distinction between ‘plush’ and ‘camel plush’ which is so crucial for Celestina may be lost to 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’. Celestina’s pejorative comment that she would be ‘wrapped up round in hair-cloth’ suggests that

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73 ‘plush’, *OED*, A.1.a [accessed 10 July 2016].
‘camel plush’ might have had an even longer nap than ‘plush’, and was possibly coarse.\textsuperscript{75} Camel plush was almost certainly cheaper and less noted than plush. Again, Celestina emphasizes the inappropriateness of this fabric for a town lady by associating it with the citizenry:

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.i.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 are at least interchangeable for the widow’s lower-class steward.

The same thing can be said about the dispute over 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”’.\textsuperscript{76} Discovering that 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.i.41-44)

\textsuperscript{76} Shirley, \textit{Lady of Pleasure}, ed. Huebert, p. 72.

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In the seventeenth century, both Mile End and Islington were rural villages frequented by the citizenry for pleasure trips. 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 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 be teasing out the audience’s social and economic status by referring to a distinction which 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, 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 of such examples. 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’. 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 material or more elaborate design for their possessions. 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’. While enabling the widow to display some dignity, Shirley also undermines her authority by evoking an erotic image of her.

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77 Shirley, Lady of Pleasure, ed. Huebert, p. 73.
78 Sanders, Cultural Geography, p. 157.
79 Richardson, Material Culture, pp. 24-28; Korda, Domestic Economies, p. 19.
80 Sanders, Cultural Geography, p. 161.
Finally, Celestina and her steward dispute the ornament of her sedan chair and liveries for its carriers. The sedan chair was as popular as the coach in the Caroline period. As Sanders shows, the title-page of Henry Peacham’s *Coach and Sedan* (163[6]) illustrates these vehicles, which I reproduce here.\(^8\)

![Fig. 34. Title page of Henry Peacham, *Coach and Sedan* (163[6]). © The British Library Board, 012314.ee.88 (title page). Used with Permission.](image)

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 and in the previous chapter, the parable of the Prodigal Son is often evoked in early modern plays appropriating the ‘lusty widow’ trope 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

\(^8\) Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 159.
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her suitors in *The Lady of Pleasure*. In fact, Celestina overtly neglects how the Prodigal Son comes to repent his extravagance in the end of the biblical story by demanding it to be represented richly and ‘[e]mbroidered with pearl’. It is striking how the widow’s wealth enables her to reduce the moralistic tale into mere ornament for her sedan chair. Although 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.

Celestina’s boldness is inseparable from her status as a widow-mistress. When her steward admonishes her against prodigality by arguing how it endangers her reputation and ‘honour’ (I.ii.65), Celestina calls him ‘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 toward 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?’82 Here, Celestina appears almost like a queen, perhaps not totally unlike Henrietta Maria. She has absolute control over her properties, 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 be simply dismissed as ‘adolescent fantasy’. Being a widow of not ‘[y]et full sixteen’, Celestina is almost an invincible female figure. Not only does she have 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 early modern audience, she might also have appeared as a formidable figure, who has 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, as it was enacted by a boy actor and an adult actor respectively. I already made this point in Chapter Two in relation to Dekker’s *Patient Grissil* (1600), and will come back to it in the second part of this chapter. 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 unusually describes the widow’s table in great detail. It is notable that Massinger represents Lady Alworth’s household as a fusion of the mourning and lively types of widows’ households. On one hand, the widow’s 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.100-02)

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 *Hygiasticum*, 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

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boyled together’. Plain, nutritious, and digestive, it is most ‘fit for weakly and aged persons’.\(^{84}\) 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 and others maintain, 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’.\(^{85}\) 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).

While modern critics have generally 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 about the widow, including her social and economic status.\(^{86}\) 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 Overreach 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 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 may be understood in this context. At the same time, however, these references might also have indicated Lady Alworth’s wealth and gastronomy to the early modern 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’. 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.

Although it is obscure 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 values.

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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’. 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 it 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. 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 for the Low Countries heroically. 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, and consuming authentic English food, Lady Alworth’s household

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91 On hunting and game as noble privileges, see Edward Berry, Shakespeare and the Hunt: A Cultural and Social Study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 1.
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not only indicates the widow’s wealth and social status, but also embodies true English identity.

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, the widow’s house is here 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 place of his absent mistress, Furnace protects his mistress from ‘all the harpies / That do devour her’ (I.ii.39-40).

By contrast, Lady Alworth allows Welborne and Marrall to enter further into her house. At first, Welborne appears as 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 a trespass, 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

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94 Lee, pp. 271-72.
to marry the wealthy widow, so that he can recover his estates from his uncle who would love 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’ (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 which 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 origin and makes him a butt among the widow’s servants.95 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’.96 Marrall’s association with the place indicates his profession as a term-driver and his middle-class origin.97 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)

95 Lindley, p. 186.
97 A ‘term-driver’ or ‘term-trotter’ is ‘one who comes up to the law-courts for the term’. ‘term, n.’, *OED*, C2 [accessed 10 July 2016].
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While restoring the hierarchy between Welborne and Marrall, Marrall’s inappropriate behaviour also blurs 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 a dramatic moment when order is instantly restored as soon as Lady Alworth enters the stage 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
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 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 class distinction is less important than her own judgement. As modern critics generally agree, A New Way clearly upholds traditional hierarchy based on birth, and represents one’s worthiness and birth as almost synonymous. Along with her future husband Lord Lovell, Lady Alworth herself is an embodiment of traditional virtues associated with the English nobility and an advocate for traditional hierarchy. Nonetheless, Lady Alworth’s speech demonstrates that she also brings in a meritocratic ideal of virtue-based-on-nature. More importantly, it indicates the widow’s independent mind or ‘will’ (I.iii.4) that prefers her own judgement over social norms.

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As I have discussed above, widows are associated with or surrounded by a wide variety of household items and other possessions in Caroline plays. These objects not only indicate widows’ social rank and economic status, but also emphasize their role as mistresses of their households by representing how widows manage and control their own properties and servants. They also tell us many things about widows’ personalities or relationships with other characters, and it is interesting to imagine how the Caroline audience interacted with and interpreted stage characters through these objects. On the other hand, it is notable that 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 Caroline plays.

2. Henrietta Maria and Ungovernable Widows in Caroline Drama

Apart from the abundance of detailed descriptions of widows’ households, there is another characteristic of the Caroline representation of widows: the frequent appearance of ungovernable widows. As discussed above, Caroline playwrights were interested in widows’ status as mistresses of their households, and their attitudes toward widow-mistresses were generally affirmative. At the same time, however, there was always anxiety over powerful widows whose authority as mistresses could disturb gender hierarchy. Although the figure of the ungovernable widow was by no means new (see Chapter Two above), Caroline playwrights’ interest in this figure was possibly fostered by a unique social context of this period. Modern critics have long recognized that Henrietta Maria and her fascination with Platonic love had a great influence on courtly and professional theatricals.99 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 gender hierarchy, had a ripple effect and provoked more general anxieties about overbearing women. Among these, widows became especially prominent and significant in Caroline plays, for they were already established in drama as figures around

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whom such anxieties clustered. In other words, it seems that Henrietta Maria created an atmosphere of heightened anxiety about ungovernable women, and this can be explored through the theatrical representation of widows.

As modern scholars have argued extensively, Henrietta Maria’s Catholicism was perceived as a considerable threat to the religious and political stability of Caroline England, and this threat was often imagined in terms of the disruption of the gender hierarchy between the royal couple. Although Henrietta Maria appeared as ‘an overly powerful Catholic consort’ almost incessantly throughout Charles’s reign, the image of her as a formidable wife shifted from one type to another over the years. In the first years of marriage, Henrietta Maria challenged Charles’s authority as king and husband by displaying her intolerance of Protestant worship in an aggressive manner. Henrietta Maria’s disobedience was evident from the first night when she refused to dance with Charles, for whom it was an important public occasion to signify his newly married status and the couple’s sexual compatibility. This was followed by a series of defiant actions, some of which even affected Henrietta Maria’s public duties as queen. For instance, Henrietta Maria refused to attend her own coronation in February 1626, objecting to being anointed by a Protestant bishop, or to present herself at the opening of Parliament. As Shell argues, these were possibly Henrietta Maria’s self-conscious acts of ‘dissociation from the proceedings of a Protestant nation’ rather than a ‘fit of adolescent pique’. It is therefore significant that Buckingham warned Charles that ‘a king who could not command his wife would make a poor impression on Parliament’. By associating Charles’s potency as husband with his ability as king, Buckingham not only evoked the common analogy between the state and the family, but also revealed that

100 Veevers, ch. 3; Rebecca A. Bailey, Staging the Old Faith: Queen Henrietta Maria and the Theatre of Caroline England, 1625-42 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), ch. 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.
103 Shell, Catholicism, p. 153; Bailey, Staging the Old Faith, pp. 32-33, 59-61.
104 Shell, Catholicism, p. 153.
Henrietta Maria’s Catholic faith would almost inevitably undermine the authority of Charles, who was the head of the Anglican Church. Charles also complained to Buckingham of his wife’s disobedience repeatedly, as evinced by his letters: ‘You know what patience I have had with the unkind usages of my wife’.105 His wife’s disobedience must have been especially menacing for Charles, whose grandmother and mother were both powerful Catholic queens. Indeed, English Catholics often expressed their joy at Charles’s marriage to Henrietta Maria by comparing the new bride to Mary, Queen of Scots, who also had a French connection from her first marriage, and whose blood-relationship with Charles gave him ‘the single most important endorsement of his monarchy’.106 Henrietta Maria’s refusal to attend her own coronation also recalls Anne of Denmark’s refusal to participate fully in the rituals of her husband’s Protestant coronation.107 Henrietta Maria and her mother-in-law also shared their interests in masques. Not only did they both actively take roles in courtly theatricals despite their gender, but also patronized Catholic writers and artists, including Inigo Jones.108 The Stuart dynasty was almost incessantly threatened by the presence of formidable Catholic queens, and Henrietta Maria, with her self-imposed Counter-Reformation mission and overt defiance to Protestantism, exacerbated this even further. It is plausible that rumours of Henrietta Maria’s disobedience to her kingly husband enhanced Caroline playwrights’ interest in the figure of the ungovernable widow.

Although Henrietta Maria’s overt challenge to Charles’s authority 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 formidable wife after this incident.109 The royal couple developed a greater mutual affection following the assassination of Buckingham in 1628, and ‘[t]he king’s devotion and the prestige her children brought her’ increased

106 Shell, Catholicism, p. 152; Bailey, Staging the Old Faith, p. 29; Britland, p. 49.
107 Britland, p. 18.
108 Sanders, Caroline Drama, p. 34; Bailey, Staging the Old Faith, pp. 34-35.
109 Shell, Catholicism, p. 153; Britland, p. 34.
Henrietta Maria’s influence on her husband. Although Henrietta Maria’s credit was briefly undermined by the revelation of her involvement in the abortive conspiracy against Cardinal Richelieu in 1633, she soon recovered her importance at court after the death of Richard Weston, first earl of Portland and another close minister of Charles, in 1635. The couple’s affectionate relationship is also evident from Henrietta Maria’s almost constant pregnancies throughout the 1630s. While the royal couple’s cordial relationship was praised as the ideal of chaste love within marriage 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. It became possible to express this anxiety explicitly during the Civil War. In *The Popish Royall Favourite* (1643), William Prynne articulates his fear that Henrietta Maria might seduce Charles into Catholicism ‘by all means and arts that may be’:

> Wee have great cause to feare (if Adams, Solomons, or Ahabs seducements by their wives be duly pondered) 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, as well as to their party.[112]

This is hardly surprising, writes Prynne, when Catholics ‘had Queen Mary her selfe in the Kings own bed and bosome’, probably associating Henrietta Maria with two problematic Catholic queens, Mary Tudor and Mary, Queen of Scots. The same fear that Henrietta Maria might proselytize Charles by ‘seducing [him] through her feminine wiles and her erotic performances’ is expressed in another of Prynne’s works, *Romes Master-Peece* (1643). Lamenting that Charles’s court is dominated by Catholics, Prynne asks:

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111 Hibbard, *ODNB*.
113 Prynne, *Popish Royall Favourite*, p. 56.
114 Sanders, *Caroline Drama*, p. 33.
And how those who are thus environed with so many industrious potent seducers of all sorts, who have so many snares to entrap, so many enticements to withdraw them, both in their Beds, Bedchambers, Closets, Counsels, Courts, where ever they goe or come, should possibly continue long untainted, unseduced[?]115

Rebecca A. Bailey has also found an anonymous pamphlet published in 1644, which expresses 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?116

These texts invariably associate Henrietta Maria with what Butler calls the ‘politicization of love’.117 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. Indeed, in the last example, 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.118 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.119 Here, Henrietta Maria is imagined as another type of a formidable wife, who, while seemingly submitting to her husband’s authority and embodying the ideal

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118 ‘curtain-lecture, n.’, *OED* [accessed 10 July 2016].
119 Veevers, p. 83.
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wife, actually controls him. As Shell aptly describes, ‘Henrietta Maria’s progress from zealous bride to emollient consort was, to some extent, the taming of a Catholic shrew’. On the other hand, it should be noted that the warm relationship between the royal couple was partly achieved by Charles’s tolerance of, if not sympathy toward, Henrietta Maria’s Catholic faith. For instance, when Henrietta Maria founded the first purpose-built Catholic Church since the Reformation at Somerset House in 1635, it was furnished with a silver dedicatory plaque presenting the pictures of the royal couple as founders. Instead of being tamed, the Catholic shrew might have tamed her husband, the taming having gone in the wrong direction. Henrietta Maria was perhaps more dangerous in this guise of a shrew who was supposedly ‘tamed’ but actually a tamer.

This latter image of Henrietta Maria, in association with her enthusiasm for Neo-Platonism, might also have inspired the representation of ungovernable widows in Caroline drama. It is notable that this negative image of Henrietta Maria as a manipulative wife, who ensnares Charles with her feminine charms and seduces him to an erroneous way, is an exact opposite of the positive image of her as a Platonic mistress. According to Erica Veevers and others, Henrietta Maria often enacted the role of a virtuous heroine whose chaste beauty inspires her wayward lover to a righteous way in courtly masques and pastorals. The implication, of course, is that Henrietta Maria’s virtue would inspire Charles to a true faith and restore Catholicism to England. This image of Henrietta Maria as a virtuous and chaste beauty strongly reflects her fascination with Platonic love. According to Veevers and Sanders, there were two phases or types of Neo-Platonism which developed in early seventeenth-century France. The vogue originally started in the 1620s in Parisian salons, which promoted ideas expressed in Honoré d'Urfé’s pastoral romance L'Astrée (1607), including woman-worship ‘in which

120 Shell, Catholicism, pp. 149-50.
121 Shell, Catholicism, p. 151.
122 Bailey, Staging the Old Faith, pp. 90-91.
123 On Henrietta Maria’s self-imposed Counter-Reformation mission and her political uses of courtly theatricals, see Veevers; Bailey, Staging the Old Faith, ch. 1; Britland, pp. 6-9.
124 Veevers, ch.1; Sanders, ‘Caroline Salon Culture’, pp. 452-55.
Beauty, Love, and Virtue provided a kind of alternative religion’. 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 fashion was followed by the emergence of another variety of Neo-Platonism in the 1630s. This new brand 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 Neo-Platonic 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.

Whereas the salon type almost invariably involved a great lady dispensing her beauty and virtue to a coterie 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.

Although, as Shell warns, we should refrain from associating Henrietta Maria’s attraction to Platonic love with her feminist intentions, the ideas of Neo-Platonism entitled women to more social importance and freedom. 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 hand, the Neo-Platonic 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 the positive image of Henrietta Maria as a Platonic mistress could easily turn into the negative image of her as a seductress well exemplifies this dual nature of Neo-Platonic woman-worship.

In this context, it is interesting that Caroline playwrights often represent widows as salon mistresses, who enjoy the company of male admirers and often exploit their affections to entertain themselves. Apart from Lady Strangelove in Brome’s The Court Beggar (1640-41), which I will discuss below, similar figures appear in Shirley’s The Lady of Pleasure and

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125 Sanders, ‘Caroline Salon Culture’, p. 453.
126 Veevers, p. 3.
127 Veevers, p. 19.
128 Shell, Catholicism, p. 155.
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*The Ball* (1632), and Jonson’s *The Magnetic Lady* (1632). Although Veevers and Sanders have associated Henrietta Maria exclusively with the court type of Neo-Platonism, Karen Britland has more recently argued that there was actually an overlap between Henrietta Maria and salon mistresses. According to Britland, 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’.  

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. 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.

Though unmentioned 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 clearly among Henrietta Maria’s ‘lively young men’. Even Holland, the eldest of all, was described by his contemporaries as ‘a very handsome man, of lovely countenance and gentle conversation’, or a womaniser. Henrietta Maria was also surrounded by courtier poets, including Davenant, Aurelian Townsend, and Lodowick Carlell, all of whom wrote masques or pastorals to praise Henrietta Maria. Although Sanders argues that satirical representations of salon mistresses in Caroline plays are almost invariably attacks against Lucy Hay, countess of

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129 Britland, p. 13.
132 Qtd. in Smuts, ‘Puritan Followers’, p. 30.
Carlisle, who was a well-known salon mistress and Henrietta Maria’s political rival, the similarities between Henrietta Maria and salon mistresses suggests that some of these representations might well have been directed against the queen herself.\textsuperscript{133}

Although I am not claiming that stage widows are allegorical representations of Henrietta Maria, it is likely that Caroline playwrights problematize the threat to gender hierarchy posed by Henrietta Maria and her feminocentric ideas through widow characters. Although Shirley and Ford also represent ungovernable widow-mistresses, I will concentrate on Brome whose representation of widows is most problematic, but has unjustly been neglected by critics. Brome’s representation of widows is generally satirical, even punitive, as evinced by his representations of the ungovernable widow-bride in \textit{The Northern Lass}, the scold and overprotecting widow-mother in \textit{The New Academy} (1636), the ‘humorous’ widow in \textit{A Mad Couple Well Matched} (1635-39), and the love tyrant in \textit{The Court Beggar}. While it is striking simply how many widow characters feature in his plays, it is equally significant that Brome almost invariably represents them as problematic figures.\textsuperscript{134} Among these, the widows in \textit{The Northern Lass} and \textit{The Court Beggar} deserve special attention, not only because their ungovernable nature is visibly punished by male characters, but also because, in the latter play, Brome appears to satirize the courtly fashion of Platonic love. In the following sections, I will discuss how Brome provokes and assuages the audience’s anxiety over widows’ wilfulness and subtlety by staging physical actions, namely violence and slanders, effectively.

\textbf{A. A Violent Widow and ‘Charivari’ in \textit{The Northern Lass}}

\textit{The Northern Lass}, acted by the King’s Men both at the Globe and the Blackfriars, was ‘a large success’ on the Caroline stage, and this can mostly be attributed to Constance, the northern lass of the title. As Sanders shows, the Caroline audience almost fell in love with this charming heroine, who

\textsuperscript{133} Sanders, ‘Caroline Salon Culture’.
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‘sings and speaks so pretty northernly’ (II.i.207). While Constance entertains the audience with her ‘pretty’ voice, Lady Fitchow, the wealthy widow of a skilful civil lawyer, brings cacophony and strife to the stage. This experienced woman who ‘has been the town widow these three years’ (I.i.5) makes a clear contrast with Constance, the innocent, naïve heroine, who has only recently come from Middlesex to London. As Sanders and Matthew Steggle maintain, Brome’s representation of Lady Fitchow is not as unfavourable as assumed by early critics, including MacDonald. Indeed, Fitchow’s declaration of her fixed love for Luckless and strong determination to marry him on her own responsibility fascinate Master Triedwell as well as the audience. Still, Fitchow’s decision to marry a mercenary gentleman who is likely to have impregnated a prostitute in the past is certainly questionable, and Brome’s representation of Fitchow’s autonomy is at best ambivalent.

Brome constantly reminds us of Fitchow’s ungovernable nature by associating her with violent actions. While Wigeon, her foolish brother, describes how the widow ‘beat [Captain Anvil] once for a jest he broke upon her monkey’ (I.i.55), Howdee, her servant, reveals that she ‘broke me a tooth once with a death’s-head ring on her finger’, which ‘has been a true memento to me ever since’ (II.iii.322). Howdee also claims to have been tormented with ‘[b]obs o’the lips, tweaks by the nose, cuffs o’the ear, and trenchers at my head in abundance’ (II.iii.322), and adds that she throws ‘[a]nything she can lift. And makes us pay for all she breaks, though she break our heads or faces withal: fan-handles, looking-glasses, or anything’ (II.iii.324). As Sanders maintains, ‘because we never see any actual examples of such violence […] there is at least space to consider Humphrey as exaggerating for effect here’. Nonetheless, Brome represents Fitchow in a way that makes these accounts plausible. For instance, when Howdee brings a ‘wimble’ – ‘an auger or carpenter’s tool for boring holes in wood’ – instead of ‘wimple’ by mistake, Fitchow threatens him in a formidable manner: ‘I shall teach you to

137 Sanders, ‘Introduction’, §34.
know a difference between gentlewoman’s gear and carpenter’s tools, I shall’ (II.ii.214). Observing that ‘she is so vexed now’ (II.ii.215), Wigeon hastily resumes their conversation to distract her. It is interesting to imagine how adult actors were intimidated by the violent nature of the widow played by a boy actor on the Caroline stage. Indeed, it is notable that Fitchow is described as having exercised violence toward not only her servant, but also Captain Anvil, who, however foolish, is a man of war. This image of the subversion of gender hierarchy must have appeared especially striking if the actor of Anvil was a stout man. It would have been both comical and intimidating for the audience to imagine him beating a small monkey, and then being beaten back by a similarly small boy actor. Also, when Fitchow disputes with Luckless over the ownership of her household, Wigeon and other characters need to soothe her:

Fitchow. Shall I not be master of my own house?  
Luckless. Am not I the master of it and you?  

LUCKLESS exit[s].

Wigeon. Nay, sister –  
Fitchow. Passion of my heart.  
Squelch [and] Bulfinch. Madam, Madam. (II.iii.369-73)

It is notable that Fitchow calls herself ‘master’ rather than ‘mistress’, again disturbing gender hierarchy by comparing herself to a man. When Fitchow finally explodes, she screams, kicks out Luckless’s servant, and threatens him: ‘Avoid my house and that presently. I’ll claw your skin off after your livery else and make you so much nakeder than time makes all other serving creatures’ (III.iii.599). She also displays her headstrongness by inveighing against her husband:

Fitchow. Am I jeered? Flouted to my face? Is this fit usage for a wife?  
Luckless. A wife? A witch!

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138 Note to II.ii.209 s.d. in Richard Brome, The Northern Lass, ed. Julie Sanders, RBO [accessed 10 July 2016].
The way Brome reveals the widow’s impregnability through her violent action and aggressive speech recalls the representation of Gwenthyan in Dekker and others’ *Patient Grissil*. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the widow’s violence and slander against her husband might have enabled a boy actor to beat an adult actor and subvert the master-apprentice relationship. Although Fitchow does not beat Luckless himself, her kicking out of his servant and violent speech toward her husband are clear indications of her defiance of male authority. Again, the destabilization of gender hierarchy by the ungovernable widow might have overlapped with the endangering of another traditional hierarchy between the master and the apprentice.

Whereas Dekker and his collaborators represent the widow’s defiance to male authority as a positive element that assuages the audience’s uneasiness about Grissil’s absolute submission, Brome instantly suppresses this threat by making male characters attack and punish the ungovernable widow in a similar manner to charivaris. According to Martin Ingram’s still useful study, charivaris or skimmington rides were ‘a well-known and widely distributed phenomenon in England’ from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, and ‘the great majority of ridings […] took place because a wife had physically assaulted her husband or otherwise dominated him’. Indeed, ‘[t]he term “skimmington” could denote not only a charivari, but also a husband who had been beaten by his wife or the termagant herself’. Basic to all skimmingtons was ‘mocking laughter, sometimes mild and good-hearted, but often taking the form of hostile derision’, and the most common supplement was cacophony or ‘rough music’, ‘produced by the ringing of bells, the raucous playing of musical instruments, the beating of pots and pans and other household utensils, and the discharge of guns and fireworks’. ‘Occasionally’, Ingram continues, ‘mocking rhymes, songs or lampoons provided a commentary’. Although I could not find any historical record of skimmingtons in Caroline London, it is possible that these events took place

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occasionally. Malcolm Jones has found an anonymous series of twelve engraved sheets printed in London in 1628, one of which “depicts a virago belabouring her husband with her key-bunch”, and “this “unnatural” inversion of the marital power relations [is] publicly satirised by a skimmington ride in the background, and in the verse”. Brome’s staging of male characters dancing and singing mockingly about scolds clearly plays the same punitive role as a charivari. The scene proceeds as follows:

They all take hands and dance round. WIGEON in the midst sings this song. They all bear the burden, while she scolds and strives to be amongst them. TRIEDWELL holds her off.

Wigeon. He that marries a scold, a scold.
He has most cause to be merry,
For when she’s in her fits, he may cherish his wits,
By singing down hey down derry.

All. Hey down down derry down down down &c.

(III.iii.625-27)

[...]

Wigeon. He that marries a merry lass,
He has most cause to be sad;
For let her go free in her merry tricks, she
Will work his patience mad.
But he that marries a scold, a scold, & c.
He that weds with a roaring girl
That will both scratch and bite;
Though he study all day to make her away,
Will be glad to please her at night.

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And he that copes with a sullen wench,
That scarce will speak at all,
Her doggedness more than a scold or a whore,
Will perpetrate his gall.

_All._

Hey down down, & c.

He that’s matched with a turtle dove,
That has no spleen about her,
Shall waste so much life in the love of his wife,
He were better be without her.

But he that marries a scold, a scold, &c. (III.iii.633-34)

The stage direction ‘she scolds’ is interesting, because it is not listed in Dessen and Thomson’s _A Dictionary of Stage Directions_ and may be a unique example in plays published between 1580 and 1642. According to the _OED_, ‘to scold’ originally means ‘to behave as a scold; to quarrel noisily; to rail at or wrangle with some one; to use violent or unseemly language in vituperation; said chiefly of women’.142 As suggested by this definition, Fitchow’s defiance is mainly a vocal one, although she might well have taken some violent actions while ‘striv[ing] to be amongst’ the male characters.

It is symbolic that Fitchow’s clamour is drowned out or diminished by the men’s mocking songs about scolds, because it overlaps with the lyrics which relate how the scold can be put ‘down’ or domesticated. This auditory effect might have been especially striking, if the voice of the boy actor playing Fitchow was recognizably higher or more feminine than the overwhelming voices of the adult actors, who played Wigeon, Luckless, Pate, Howdee, Anvil, and possibly Triedwell. Indeed, it is notable that Luckless has earlier complained that Fitchow’s voice is worse than ‘[t]he outrage of ’prentices’ (III.iii.585). Although Luckless is probably referring to apprentices’ riots which also involved a cacophony of young male voices, his comparison is an appropriate one because the widow was indeed played by an apprentice. While highlighting the image of Fitchow as a threat to gender hierarchy by evoking the cross-dressed heroine in Dekker and Middleton’s _The Roaring Girl_ (1611), these songs argue that the scold, though she might ‘bite and

142 ‘scold, v.’, _OED_, 1.a [accessed 11 July 2016].
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scratch’, can be literally put ‘down’ by her husband who is ‘glad to please her at night’. Here, Brome associates the image of Fitchow as a scold with the stereotypical image of the lusty widow. Indeed, the name Fitchow associates the widow with sensuality, because a ‘fitchew’ or polecat was proverbially associated with lechery and a strong smell. As Sanders notes, the same term is used to describe Bianca, a prostitute wearing perfume, in Othello (c. 1601-4). This association may also imply that the scold is good at sex, which is somewhat true when the scold is a widow or sexually experienced woman; perhaps the energy she puts into her scolding and violence suggested her energy and spirit in bed. Although these songs can also be directed against Luckless who is married to the scold, they subtly avoid undermining his authority by stressing how he can still put her ‘down’ despite her ungovernable nature. Indeed, the fact that Luckless joins the round and sings the same songs with other male characters visibly exempts him from their target.

Indeed, the exclusionist tone of the songs is stressed not only by auditory effects but also visual images. It is symbolic that Master Bulfinch, the Justice of the Peace and Fitchow’s friend, enters between the two songs, and is pulled ‘into the round’ (III.i.632 s.d.) by the cohort of male characters, who have earlier excluded Fitchow. In the opening scene, Triedwell stresses the ungovernable nature of the widow by discussing how she is ‘still conversant with doctors and proctors of the civil law, of which tribe her husband was too’ (I.i.5). By dragging the Justice of the Peace into their own circle, the male characters visually usurp from the widow her connection with legal authority, which has made her a formidable widow. It is as if to demonstrate that justice is always on the male side, no matter what, and that Fitchow’s defiance to male authority makes her isolated and vulnerable. Again, this image might also have been emphasized by the fact that the audience would have seen a boy actor excluded from and attacked by the circle of adult actors, punishing him for his/her disobedience and impertinence on the stage. It is also significant that this punitive ritual takes place in Fitchow’s house, to which the widow and her new husband have

143 Note to ‘The Persons in the Comedy’, in Brome, The Northern Lass, ed. Sanders, RBO.
moved after their marriage. After hearing these songs, Fitchow exclaims: ‘Slaves, rascals, get ye all out of my doors!’ (III.iii.635). Although the fact that Fitchow ‘[f]lies upon all’ (III.iii.635 s.d.) and drives them away from her house indicates that she still retains some power, her authority as mistress of her household is clearly undermined by her remarriage: ‘Has my ladyship made me so lamentable a thing that I have lost the power of a mistress?’ (III.iii.612)

It is worth recalling that Fitchow’s marriage to Luckless has been her own decision, and she has insisted on marrying him even after hearing Triedwell’s warning about Luckless’s prodigality and mercenary intention. Although Triedwell’s warning to the widow is a hypocritical one, deriving from his wish to save his kinsman from marriage to an experienced widow, Fitchow’s self-determined remarriage ironically undermines her authority as widow-mistress by revealing that her judgement is misleading, and makes her dependent on Triedwell and Bulfinch. Her acceptance of male authority is visually signified by her admission of these men into her household. After driving away other male characters, Fitchow speaks to Bulfinch as follows: ‘Pray come in, sir, I will hear your counsel together with this gentleman’s advice’ (III.iii.643). After hearing their counsels, Fitchow even promises to forsake her ‘womanly wilfulness’ as she implies that she will marry Triedwell after her divorce from Luckless: ‘all my wilfulness – that I’ll promise you, sir – shall die in the end of this business’ (IV.i.711). Although Fitchow does not lose her attraction and strength as a character completely, Brome clearly shifts his focus from the ungovernable widow to Constance, the innocent heroine, and Camitha Holdup, the cunning prostitute, after the third act. The widow also loses a power to control the plot after this incident. For instance, Fitchow’s scheme to marry her brother to Constance to disappoint Luckless’s love for her is prevented by Triedwell, who introduces Holdup as Constance to the widow and makes her marry her brother to the prostitute. It is ironic that Fitchow is again deceived by a man whom she has trusted and even promised marriage, although Triedwell is represented as a worthier man than Luckless. By punishing Fitchow’s wilfulness in a charivari-like manner, Brome restores the gender hierarchy formerly destabilized by the ungovernable widow.
B. The Widow as a Platonic Mistress/Love Tyrant in *The Court Beggar*

Brome’s representation of widows’ autonomy is also ambiguous in *The Court Beggar*, although he eventually recovers the widow’s power and enables her to bring about a happy ending. 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 (the son of Christopher Beeston, who died in 1638).\(^{144}\)

Although this view has been contested by some critics, it is almost indisputable that Brome satirizes certain courtiers and practices at the Caroline court.\(^{145}\) While stressing Brome’s hostility against courtier poets and how he lampoons Suckling and Davenant in the figures of Sir Ferdinando and Court-wit, critics have never discussed Brome’s ambiguous representation of Lady Strangelove in relation to his scepticism toward the courtly fashion of Platonic love.\(^{146}\) It is highly plausible that Brome satirizes the vogue for Platonic love in *The Court Beggar*, considering that he mocked the same fashion a few years earlier in *The Love-Sick Court* (1638). Indeed, the play anticipates *The Court Beggar* in one interesting way. When Eudina ends up promising love for both Philocles and Philargus, the noble twin brothers who equally admire her as a Platonic mistress, she cries:

\[
\text{Strange love! In other’s absence I took either} \\
\text{And loved each best; now both at once appear,} \\
\text{Neither is mine. (II.i.272)}
\]

The phrase ‘strange love’ points to the name of the widow-mistress in *The Court Beggar*. Here, Brome reveals the ambiguity of the ideal of the Platonic mistress. While it is honourable for women to have numerous admirers and


\(^{146}\) Brome’s ambiguous representation of Lady Strangelove is briefly discussed in MacDonald, pp. 43-45.
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enjoy Platonic relations with them, the image of a woman surrounded by male ‘servants’ can always turn into a negative one, which implies her pride and sexual promiscuity. Although Eudina’s inability to choose one man is attributed to the equal nobility of the brothers rather than her promiscuity, her inconstancy anticipates Lady Strangelove’s responsiveness to various suitors.

Brome highlights the same ambiguity in The Court Beggar by blurring the boundary between the Platonic mistress and the love tyrant by representing Lady Strangelove as ‘a humorous widow’ (‘Dramatis Personae’). Before she appears, Charissa describes the widow while objecting to her father’s intention to marry her to a court favourite, Ferdinando. Although this ‘wanton lover, full of change’ is now ‘singularly devoted / Unto that humorous lady, the young widow’ (I.i.28),

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)

As Sir Raphael later 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). While the widow’s preservation of her chastity among male admirers seems to make her a Platonic mistress, she appears more as a love tyrant whose teasing and whimsical manner triggers ‘the mishaps / Of many’ (II.i.267), including Ferdinando, who is reputed to have been driven mad by her. The ideal of a Platonic mistress is also questioned by Brome’s representation of Lady Strangelove as a salon mistress, as she summons Court-wit, Swain-wit, Cit-wit, and Dainty to her ‘wit-office’ (II.i.303). These men’s exchange during the widow’s off-stage conversation with Sir Raphael reveals her authority over her male ‘servants’. Not only can she oblige them to come over without telling her intention (II.i.235-36), but also she can keep them waiting for her as long as she wishes, as implied by Swain-wit’s complaint (II.i.197). When she finally appears, Lady Strangelove reveals her intention to produce a
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masque, addressing herself first 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 seems to fit into the model of a salon mistress by patronizing poets and artists and organizing 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 described by Cit-wit as ‘a wit-sponge, that sucks up wit from some, and hold as her own, until she squeeze it out on others’ (II.i.242). His metaphor is possibly an obscene one, evoking the widow’s insatiable vagina that ‘sucks up’ and empties her male ‘servants’. Indeed, sponges were traditionally used as contraceptives, inserted to the vagina to absorb semen.\(^{147}\) Cit-wit also seems to imply the widow’s (sexual) 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. It is likely that Brome here mocks courtier poets, who called themselves ‘wits’ and wrote exclusively for an elite audience, by associating the term with working-class people, perhaps glancing back to Davenant’s

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origin as a vintner’s son. He also seems to satirize Henrietta Maria’s patronage of these writers and her fascination with Neo-Platonism by highlighting the salon mistress’s vanity and complacency. By representing Lady Strangelove as a humorous widow who tyrannizes over her male ‘servants’, Brome reveals that the Platonic mistress and the love tyrant are two sides of the same coin and disturbs the favourable image of the former.

It is Lady Strangelove’s social and economic freedom as a widow that enables her to enjoy this privileged status as a salon mistress. Like Massinger, Brome signifies the widow’s wealth and social rank by representing many rooms or spaces of her house. When Court-wit, Swain-wit, and Cit-wit arrive at Lady Strangelove’s household, Philomel, her maid, asks them to wait in ‘this gallery’ (II.i.173) for her mistress, who is in discussion with 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) for Ferdinando to cure his madness, and there is apparently the ‘garden’ (III.ii.542) outside these lodgings. The widow’s socio-economic status is also indicated by the following speech delivered after her dismissal of Sir Raphael, who has come to blame her for Ferdinando’s alleged 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)

It is notable that Lady Strangelove stresses not only her tremendous wealth, but also her liberty to choose her own guests. On the other hand, the widow’s admittance of various men into her house undermines her authority as

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148 Mary Edmond, ‘Davenant, Sir William (1606-1668)’, *ODNB* [accessed 11 July 2016].
mistress of her household by allowing them to criticize her ‘in her own house’ (II.i.243), as well as endangers her sexual reputation. Whereas her ‘wits’ gossip about their mistress’s humorous character behind her back, Sir Raphael censures the widow for concealing her vow of chastity and ‘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 to some extent, or at least make 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). Like Fitchow, Lady Strangelove allows male authority to enter her household after Sir Raphael’s censure, as she consents to provide accommodation for Ferdinando, following the Doctor’s instruction that her ‘frequent presence may be helpful / Towards his care’ (II.i.361).

However, Lady Strangelove’s admittance of male authority into her household undermines her authority as widow-mistress 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 the image of her as a Platonic mistress by attempting a sexual assault.

While it is not uncommon to see a frustrated suitor’s attempt to rape a widow in early modern plays, as exemplified by Barry’s Ram-Alley (1607-8), Joshua Cooke’s Greene’s Tu Quoque (1611), and Field’s Amends for Ladies (1610-11), as well as the second part of Marlowe’s Tamburlaine (1587) which I discussed in Chapter Two, Brome’s staging of Ferdinando’s sexual assault on the widow is unique in concealing the scene itself from the audience’s eye. In this scene, Brome divides the play’s world into three spaces. While Court-wit, Swain-wit, and Cit-wit are conversing in the widow’s ‘garden’ (III.ii.542) or the main stage, Lady Strangelove is visiting Ferdinando who has been moved into her ‘garden lodgings’ (II.i.403), represented by the tiring house and the stage balcony. Simultaneously, Philomel and Dainty are having a private conversation off-stage. When the scene opens, Swain-wit enters and speaks to Cit-wit and Court-wit as follows:

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.\(^{149}\) Although it soon becomes clear that Swain-wit is talking about Philomel and Dainty, his bawdy speech is rather obscure and makes us wonder whether he is speaking of Lady Strangelove and Ferdinando. Indeed, the audience has just seen Lady Strangelove’s acceptance of the Doctor’s request to visit Ferdinando’s chamber. Here, Brome subtly eroticizes the widow by associating her with her wanton maid, who has just been revealed as having suffered from ‘the clap’ (III.i.495), and is now flirting with Dainty while knowing Cit-wit’s intention to marry her. It is noteworthy that the three characters’ suspicion about what is happening between Philomel and Dainty derives from their inability to see the couple’s private meeting. Brome encourages the audience to feel the same voyeuristic desire as the three ‘wits’ by keeping the scenes of Philomel’s meeting with Dainty and Lady Strangelove’s meeting with Ferdinando out of sight. This voyeuristic desire culminates at the moment of Ferdinando’s sexual assault on the widow. While Swain-wit castigates Cit-wit for his cowardice, the three ‘wits’ suddenly hear screams:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Strangelove.} & \quad [\text{Screaming,} \text{ unseen, above.}] \quad \text{Help, help! Here help!} \\
& \quad \text{Aaaaah}!! \\
\text{Swain-wit.} & \quad [\text{To CIT-WIT}] \quad \text{Why dost not draw and run in upon ’em?} \\
\text{Cit-wit.} & \quad \text{After you I will, sir.} \\
\text{Swain-wit.} & \quad \text{A pox upon thee! Art thou down again?} \\
\text{Cit-wit.} & \quad [\text{Drawing his sword}] \quad \text{No, sir, I am drawn, you see.} \\
\text{Strangelove.} & \quad [\text{Still unseen above}] \quad \text{Help, help, a rape, a rape, murder, help! (III.ii.602-07)}
\end{align*}
\]

Upon hearing these screams, Philomel and Dainty also enter the main stage and discover that Lady Strangelove’s screams come from Ferdinando’s chamber. When they hear another scream, Swain-wit, Court-wit, and Dainty

\(^{149}\) Note to III.ii.542, in Richard Brome, *The Court Beggar*, ed. Marion O’Connor, *RBO* [accessed 11 July 2016].
draw their swords and run out from the stage with Philomel, in order to rescue the widow in the stage balcony. Cit-wit, however, stays on the main stage for fear and stands amazed with his sword drawn. Again, together with Cit-wit, the audience is forbidden to see what is happening inside Ferdinando’s chamber, while hearing noises and suggestive speeches:

_Ferdinand._150 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 demi-culverin 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, as articulated by his last speech: ‘Hold me not down, but rear me up’. Ferdinando compares Lady Strangelove to ‘Medusa’, a Greek female monster whose hideous face and serpents in place of hair would turn gazers into stone, because the widow has made him impotent and unable to achieve his intention. On the other hand, Ferdinando’s cry – ‘Stone, stone, I am all stone’ – is ambiguous to some extent, because it might well indicate his potency instead of impotency. The word ‘stone’ often signified testicles in early modern England, and the stiffness of stone also evokes the image of erection. Cit-wit’s argument that if Ferdinando makes a pair of cannon bullets, instead of a bulwark, they would be “‘thumping” or strikingly big’ may also emphasize the size of Ferdinando’s genitals and his virility.151 By concealing the scene in question from the audience and giving them partial information

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150 Spelled as in O’Connor’s edition.
151 A demi-culverin is ‘[a] kind of cannon formerly in use, of about 4½ inches bore’ (‘demi-culverin, n.’, _OED_ [accessed 11 July 2016]). A thumper refers to ‘[a]nything ‘thumping’ or strikingly big of its kind’ (‘thumper, n.’, _OED_, 3 [accessed 11 July 2016]).
through noise, Brome facilitates the audience’s obscene imagination about what is happening between the widow and her frustrated suitor inside the stage balcony. Brome thus eroticizes the widow and disturbs the image of her as a Platonic mistress by associating the widow with her wanton maid and arousing the audience’s voyeuristic interest in her sexuality.

Ferdinando’s sexual assault also questions the notion of Platonic love by revealing base sexual desire underlying the chaste discourse of courtly love. It is notable that Ferdinando poses as a melancholic lover in his alleged madness and parodies the language of courtly love to extol his widow-mistress. When he is conveyed to her lodgings for the treatment of his madness, Ferdinando imagines himself as a poet 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 interesting that these women, though completely opposite to each other, both make their lovers impotent symbolically or literally. Whereas Laura’s aloofness debars her lover from satisfying his sexual desire, Corinna’s readiness to accept her lover’s sexual advance disillusions him and makes him impotent in bed. 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 interesting that these women, though completely opposite to each other, both make their lovers impotent symbolically or literally. Whereas Laura’s aloofness debars her lover from satisfying his sexual desire, Corinna’s readiness to accept her lover’s sexual advance disillusions him and makes him impotent in bed. 152 Although Ferdinando’s impotence will be triggered by the widow’s strong resistance rather than her sexual responsiveness in the next scene, his reference to Corinna evokes the image of Lady Strangelove as a lusty widow and increases the audience’s bawdy imagination prior to his sexual assault. Ferdinando’s appropriation of poetic language continues as he asks Phoebus to ‘[s]end forth your sweetest harmony whilst I sing’ (III.i.431) in praise of his chaste mistress.

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However, this is also disturbed by his sudden remembrance of the widow’s scornful manner:

But, oh, she is disdainful, and her scorn
Hath blotted all the glory of her praise.
Away, away with all! (III.i.431)

Instead of ‘sing[ing] / Her praise’ (III.i.431), Ferdinando degrades his scornful mistress by associating her with hell rather than heaven through the figures of Proserpina and the Whore of Babylon. The latter image is especially striking as it reveals Ferdinando’s violent desire to ravish and destroy her:

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)

Ferdinando’s reference to the phallic steeple and his punning on ‘firk’ (beat, lash) and ‘fuck’ clearly 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 virginal chastity, the notion of Platonic love, and Catholicism. It is also ironic that Ferdinando starts comparing Lady Strangelove to the goddess of chastity only after his attempted rape of her. That he compares the widow to Cynthia is clearly satirical, not only because it is too bombastic, but also because it is preceded by Ferdinand’s whimsical dance:

He dances a conceited country dance, first doing his honours, then as leading forth his lass. He dances both man and woman’s actions, as if the dance consisted of two or three couples. At last as offering to kiss his lass, he fancies that they are all vanished, and espies Strangelove.

153 Shell, Catholicism, p. 25.
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Ferdinand. How now! all vanished, ha!
It is no marvel that the lesser lights
Become obscured when Cynthia appears,
Let me with adoration fall before
Thy deity, great goddess.

Strangelove. Keep him from me.

(IV.ii.713-14)

It is likely that Brome here parodies the fashion for courtly masques, which often include mythological figures as well as dancing, by making them into ‘the madman’s revels’ (IV.ii.711). Although Ferdinando’s mock performance may not be as loud and disturbing as the charivari in *The Northern Lass*, its political implication is much more serious, because it is likely to have been a satirical comment on the vogue of Platonic love promoted by Henrietta Maria and her courtier poets. It is appropriate that Brome uses the figure of the widow to mock the language of courtly love and destabilize the notion of Platonic love, not only because widows are sexually active women, but also because the ‘lusty widow’ trope is itself a kind of a parody of the courtly love tradition. Although widows with wealth and social standing are often surrounded by suitors who swear their sincere love and praise them in poetic language, their relationship is far from being Platonic, because the suitors’ real intention lies in the widows’ money and their own sexual satisfaction. By representing the suitor’s sexual assault on the widow, Brome not only punishes the widow’s ungovernable nature, but also reveals the notion of Platonic love as pretentious and hypocritical.

Although, unlike in *The Northern Lass*, Brome restores the widow’s authority after this incident in *The Court Beggar*, he continues to problematize the notion of Platonic love through the figure of Lady Strangelove. It is noteworthy that Ferdinando becomes impotent before he accomplishes his sexual assault on the widow. This signifies that Lady Strangelove is indeed a Platonic mistress, whose chastity deprives men of immoderate sexual desire and inspires them to non-sexual love. Lady Strangelove’s chastity is testified to by Ferdinando himself, when he explains
to Frederick, Charissa’s lover, why he has feigned madness and tried to assault the widow:

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 Ferdinando’s expectation, Lady Strangelove demonstrates her chastity by resisting his sexual assault resolutely. While this indicates that the widow is indeed a Platonic mistress, it evokes fear rather than admiration, because her strong chastity even makes Ferdinando impotent. It is notable that Brome here represents the ideal of Platonic love in its most literal sense. By associating Lady Strangelove’s chastity with Ferdinando’s impotence, he demonstrates that the ideal of Platonic love is doubly threatening for masculinity, for it makes men not only ‘servants’ to women, but also ‘impotent’. Indeed, Brome associates the notion of Platonic love with images of impotence and castration throughout the play. For instance, 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), so that he can establish non-sexual relations with women and preach chastity to them. It is also notable that Lady Strangelove punishes the Doctor who has been complicit with Ferdinando’s sexual assault on her by threatening him with castration. After Ferdinando’s attempted rape, Court-wit, Swain-wit, and Cit-wit drag the Doctor before their widow-mistress and suggest 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 astonished by the widow’s 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,
As O’Connor notes, it was actually very rare for early modern women to be onlookers of this kind of spectacle, although their bodies were often anatomized by male doctors. By insisting on watching the surgery, Lady Strangelove not only claims the privileged position of the spectator generally reserved for men, but also makes the male authority-figure assume the ‘female’ position. Indeed, ‘a sow-gelder’ is one ‘whose business is to geld or spay sows’, namely female pigs. It is also important that Lady Strangelove stages the Doctor’s castration while replacing ‘the doctor’s tragicomedy’ (IV.ii.712) announced by Swain-wit, Court-wit, and Cit-wit. Although the three ‘wits’ try to avenge Ferdinando’s sexual assault on the widow by incurring physical punishment on the Doctor, they never come up with the idea of castration. Moreover, it is actually these characters who have announced and possibly staged Ferdinando’s mocking pageant which undermines the authority of their widow-mistress:

*Court-wit.* Here, Madam, may you see the madman’s revels
*Swain-wit.* And after that the doctor’s tragicomedy. (IV.ii.711-12)

By suppressing the male theatricals and staging the spectacle of the Doctor’s castration instead, Lady Strangelove recovers her theatrical power as well as her authority as mistress of her household. Indeed, it is symbolic that she conspires with ‘one of my house music’ (IV.ii.770) and makes him disguise himself as a sow-gelder, in order to punish the male authority-figure for causing the disruption of her household. The widow’s threat of castration also triggers the Doctor’s confession of Ferdinando’s feigned madness and enables her to lead the play to a happy ending. While the fact that Brome makes Lady Strangelove ask the female audience for ‘your suffrages […] / For th’humble poet’ in the Epilogue (1139) suggests that he probably considered his portrayal of the widow as a positive one, it should be noted

154 Note to IV.ii.742, in Brome, *The Court Beggar*, ed. O’Connor, *RBO.*
155 ‘sow-gelder, n.’, *OED, a* [accessed 11 July 2016].
that he recovers the image of Lady Strangelove as a formidable widow along with her theatrical power and authority as mistress. She now appears as a Platonic mistress *par excellence* who forces men to be ‘Platonic’ by making them literally impotent and castrated. Although this fear toward the ‘Platonic’ widow seems to be suppressed by her consent to marry Ferdinando, it is notable that Brome not only reveals the notion of Platonic love as ridiculous and hypocritical, but also represents it as a threat to masculinity and gender hierarchy. In this manner, Brome seems to indicate the courtly fashion of Platonic love as a formidable concept promoted by the Catholic queen consort to deprive men of masculinity and authority.

In this chapter, I have examined the Caroline representation of widows by highlighting theatrical and socio-political contexts unique to this period. First, I discussed how the prominence of hall theatres might have increased the number of detailed descriptions of widows’ households in Caroline plays, and how these descriptions of household items and other possessions indicate widows’ social and economic status as well as their authority as mistresses of their households. Then, I considered how the Caroline anxiety about Henrietta Maria’s cultural influence, especially her disruption of the traditional gender hierarchy, might have enhanced playwrights’ interests in the figure of the ungovernable widow by focusing on Brome’s plays. As I stressed through this chapter, the Caroline representation of widows has many unique aspects, which are strongly related to the period’s social, economic, political, and theatrical contexts. Although Caroline playwrights continued many Elizabethan and Jacobean conventions, they surely ‘found voices of their own’, as Bulman writes, by skilfully adapting these conventions to their own period.156

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156 Bulman, p. 345.
Conclusion

In this study, I have examined the representation of widows in plays written or performed between 1576 and 1642, from the opening to the closure of the London commercial theatres. My purpose in this study was two-fold. First, I wanted to explore how widows appeared differently in each period, according to its own social, political, and theatrical contexts. Although critics have long assumed that the images of widows did not change during these years and have classified them into character types almost indiscriminately, there are differences as well as similarities between the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline representation of widows. On one hand, there was continuity. The two basic types of the lamenting widow and the lusty widow which I discussed in Chapter Two were used and adapted by playwrights throughout the early modern period. On the other hand, there was discontinuity. A widow’s ungovernable nature which assuages the audience’s uneasiness about a heroine’s absolute submission to her husband in *Patient Grissil* (1600) is punished in a charivari-like manner in Caroline plays, possibly reflecting male anxiety toward Henrietta Maria’s cultural influence, as I discussed in Chapters Two and Five respectively. By examining plays chronologically and highlighting the diverse contexts of each period or production, I tried to emphasize the complexity of the early modern representation of widows and the importance of reading plays within specific contexts, following the agenda of historicist criticism.

Second, I wanted to consider how widows and their ambiguous status in patriarchal society might have been represented on the early modern stage in relation to the material conditions of contemporary theatres. Although existing studies have greatly deepened our understanding of widow characters by conducting close reading of play-texts as well as socio-historical research, it is also essential to pay attention to material aspects, such as costumes, props, gestures, actors, the audience, and theatre structure, in order to understand widow characters or a whole play accurately. My interest in these aspects has illuminated the complexity of widow characters even further. A widow’s mourning costume, for example, not only makes her a relic of her husband,
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but also indicates her as a marriageable woman, stressing her liminal status between death and life, past and future, and chastity and sexual availability, as I discussed in Chapter One. It is also probable that a widow’s liminality was stressed by the fact that she was embodied by a boy actor, whose adolescent body and changing voice emphasized her/his gender ambiguity, as I proposed in Chapter Four. By discussing material aspects of early modern theatre as well as reading plays carefully in relation to diverse contexts, I tried to illuminate complex meanings and interpretations which have not been fully discovered by text-based analyses.

My discussion in each chapter can be summarized as follows. In Chapter One, I presented an alternative history of widows’ physical appearance by using portraits and woodcuts, and discussed what kind of costumes, accessories, and small props might have been used to denote widows visually on the early modern stage. In Chapter Two, I considered the development of the two basic types of the lamenting widow and the lusty widow in Elizabethan plays, and demonstrated how playwrights blurred the boundary between these types by stressing the theatricality of widows’ mourning gestures and lamentation. In Chapter Three, I examined the transition from the late Elizabethan to the early Jacobean period by focusing on the figure of the husband’s ghost. By replacing the Elizabethan figure of the husband’s ghost with the comic figure of the jealous husband who tries to control his wife’s sexuality even after his death, Chapman’s and Middleton’s satirical plays anticipate more favourable representations of widows’ remarriage in subsequent years. In Chapter Four, I concentrated on the three plays performed by the King’s Men in the mid-1610s. While highlighting some formidable aspects of autonomous widows, these plays represent widows’ new love and remarriage sympathetically. After discussing how widows’ and boy actors’ liminal status between two genders might have overlaid on one another in the original production of Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14), I considered Middleton’s two romance comedies in relation to his uses of the stage balcony and appropriation of the ‘lusty widow’ trope respectively. Finally, in Chapter Five, I examined the Caroline representation of widows, a subject which has mostly been neglected by critics. First, I discussed the correlation between the increasing number of detailed descriptions of widows’ households, and the popularity of hall
theatres and the audience’s interest in household items in this period. Then, I considered how Henrietta Maria’s disruption of gender hierarchy might have increased playwrights’ interest in the figure of the ungovernable widow, whose disturbance of gender hierarchy is punished through physical action and verbal slanders on the stage.

My study has been driven by the desire to demonstrate that there remains much to explore about the early modern theatrical representation of widows. As mentioned in the Introduction, there have been numerous studies on this topic from the early 1970s, and many aspects of widow characters in early modern drama have been discovered, thanks to critics’ close examination of play-texts and scrupulous research on social history about early modern widows. There was even a feeling that this field of study had reached saturation point after the publication of Panek’s landmark book in 2004. A review of Kehler’s study of Shakespearean plays published in 2009 indicates this succinctly; though the book was described as ‘richly informative’, Kehler was felt to have struggled to make her study original, referring to the social history of various countries in various periods in a mixed manner. 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 in early modern drama. Widows have long fascinated early modern playwrights as well as modern critics because of their elusiveness, ambiguity, and power to disrupt standard categories. Playwrights represented widows repeatedly on the stage not only because they were popular commodities in the early modern theatrical industry, but also because they enabled the playwrights to raise questions about various topics, including gender, politics, religion, and social structure. Widows’ economic and social autonomy indicates that patriarchal control of women in early modern England was by no means absolute or inescapable. Indeed, the fact that widows could cause social mobility or even disrupt dynastic succession by making their own decision of remarriage reveals that patriarchal oppression of women was inseparable from male anxiety over women’s formidable influence. Widows’ remarriage was also a religious issue, which could arouse

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the English audience’s antagonism to 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 gender issues, such as women’s subordination to men, autonomy, and sexuality, and participated in the manifest general interest in the period in controversies over the nature and role of women by appropriating widows’ ambiguous status as a site of conflict or dialogue between two oppositional ideologies. This has also made the figure of the widow the centre of concerns for many of our contemporary critics, especially for those who are feminist-oriented. The unconventional status of widows has enabled these critics not only to reconsider the nature of patriarchy in early modern England, but also to reveal the vulnerability of patriarchy in general as a mere construction of male-centred ideologies.\(^2\) The fact that widows are so elusive and difficult to grasp in both theatre and reality also encourages us to leave our conventional, dichotomous understanding of women, and materialize the individual case of each widow with her specific concerns and attributes in mind. By highlighting social, political, religious, and theatrical contexts of each representation, and by illuminating the material lives of both stage and real-life widows, I hope my study has been able to demonstrate an alternative way to approach the complexity of the early modern theatrical representation of widows, and to appropriate this rich topic for our own feminist objectives.

I also hope that my study has made a contribution to the study of early modern drama in general by extending 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 theatrical productions in three-dimensional images, and this has led to numerous studies of material aspects of early modern theatre, or more broadly, early modern material culture. The establishments of the Globe and Sam Wanamaker Playhouses are both incarnations and triggers of such studies, facilitating our understanding of early modern theatre by enabling directors and actors to experiment with numerous possibilities for staging early modern

\(^2\) Oakes, pp. 18-19; Kehler, *Shakespeare’s Widows*, pp. 51-55; Todd, pp. 81-82.
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 the last decade. 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, including Hampton Court Palace. I believe that examining the theatrical representation of widows is one of the effective ways 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 about conventions in early modern theatre. For instance, as I discussed in Chapter Four, although boy actors have generally been regarded as vulnerable commodities exploited by acting companies and consumed by the audience, the fact that the Duchess of Malfi’s defiance toward 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 Five, 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 recently begun to attract critical attention. 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

3 Staging the Henrician Court <http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/index.html> [accessed 11 July 2016]; Staging and Representing the Scottish Renaissance Court <http://stagingthescottishcourt.brunel.ac.uk/> [accessed 11 July 2016].

4 For instance, see Holly Dugan, “‘As Dirty as Smithfield and Stinking Every Whit’: The Smell of the Hope Theatre’, in Shakespeare’s Theatres, eds. Karim-Cooper and Stern, pp. 195-214.
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performance, as I suggested in the Introduction of this study in relation to the Sam Wanamaker production of *Malfi*.

Going further, my study has aroused two more questions about the early modern theatrical representation of widows. First, it is worth considering how widows or widowhood might have appeared in the so-called ‘closet drama’ of aristocratic female writers. Although I concentrated on plays written by professional male writers for commercial theatres in this study, many female writers also dramatized or pondered upon widowhood in their plays. Mary Sidney, countess of Pembroke, translated Robert Garnier’s neo-Senecan tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra, which was first published under the title *Antonius: A Tragedie* (1592). Challenging the traditional Renaissance image of Cleopatra as a dangerous seductress, Sidney represents her as the faithful wife and widow of Antonius, and discusses how a woman should behave at the time of her husband’s death. *Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry* (1604) by Elizabeth Cary, viscountess Falkland, also highlights the psychological complexity of a woman who has just been informed of her husband’s death. While rejoicing in her liberation from his tyranny, Mariam is greatly disturbed by finding herself overwhelmed by unexpected grief. It is plausible that female writers were able to cut into widows’ psychology more deeply than male playwrights, because widowhood was a potential life event for them. Indeed, Lady Mary Wroth was a widow when she wrote *Love’s Victory* (c. 1621). She had also been involved in a longstanding affair with her married cousin, William Herbert, earl of Pembroke and the son of Mary Sidney, although the relationship between her work and biography must be treated cautiously. These plays are also intriguing in terms of performance, because women themselves might have read aloud or acted the role of the widow. Performed or read aloud in aristocratic households and circulated

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6 Here I use the author’s maiden name by which she is usually known.

7 Margaret P. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 100.

8 Critics are still debating whether ‘closet drama’ were intended for performance or reading, and if they were performed, whether women took
among leading literary figures of the day in forms of printed texts or manuscripts, plays by female writers must have played a significant role in constructing images of widows which were different from those presented by male playwrights.

Second, the fact that widows also appear frequently in ‘closet drama’ composed during the Interregnum and in Restoration drama encourages us to explore beyond the Caroline period. While Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle, continues the question asked by Sidney and Cary – how a woman should face her husband’s death – by representing a mourning war-widow who dies of sorrow after erecting a monument for her husband in *Bell in Campo* (1653-62), ⁹ many Restoration playwrights, including George Etherege, William Wycherley, and William Congreve, represent comical figures of widows, as has been discussed in two unpublished doctoral dissertations. ¹⁰ Though completely neglected in these studies, there were numerous theatrical innovations after the Restoration, including the emergence of actresses, and it is worth considering how the stage representation of widows might have changed after these innovations. Alongside actresses, professional female playwrights also appeared in the Restoration period. Aphra Behn, above all, wrote several plays with widow characters, including *The Widow Ranter* (1689). It would be worthwhile to ask how similarly or differently commercial plays by female writers might have represented widows in comparison to those by male writers.

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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 in 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 has written two and half decades ago, citing Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt’s pioneering *Feminist Criticism and Social Change* (1985): ‘One of the things that materialist feminist criticism means […] is “more work than one is used to”’. 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.

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Appendix: List of Plays with Widow Characters

The following is a list of extant plays with widow characters between 1538 and 1642. Although my study covers the period between 1576 and 1642, and focuses on plays written for or performed at the London commercial theatres, I include plays written or performed prior to this period in order to make the list more comprehensive.

In making the list, I first synthesized information provided by similar 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). Then, I augmented plays missing from these lists, especially Caroline plays, by 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 edn (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, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012-15), 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 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 format of the list, I basically 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 1616. 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 listed as they appear in the ‘Headings’ in Wiggins and Richardson, although they are occasionally abbreviated to save the space. 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 primarily look at ‘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 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 1616, I follow Alfred Harbage’s *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, rev. Samuel Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim, 3rd edn (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 of my list). 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.

When a play is dated post-1616 by Wiggins and Richardson, thus currently unavailable in their catalogue, but is dated pre-1616 by modern editions or the *Annals*, I also name the references in the ‘Source’ column.

For abbreviations, ‘lic.’ stands for the date of performance licence, and ‘pub.’ stands for the date of publication in the ‘Date Limits’ column. In the ‘Source’ column, *RBO* stands for *Richard Brome Online* <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/>, as in the rest of this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date Limits</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Company/Venue</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1538</td>
<td>Bale, J.</td>
<td><em>King John</em></td>
<td>1538-39</td>
<td>history; moral</td>
<td>acted in either the London or Canterbury residence of Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury</td>
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<tr>
<td>1550</td>
<td>Udall, N.</td>
<td><em>Roister Doister</em></td>
<td>1550-53</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1553</td>
<td>Udall, N.?</td>
<td><em>Respublica</em></td>
<td>Christmas 1553-54</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>a boy company (unidentified)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1554</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td><em>Impatient Poverty</em></td>
<td>1554-58</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1566</td>
<td>Gascoigne, G.</td>
<td><em>Supposes (translating L. Ariosto)</em></td>
<td>1566</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Gray’s Inn</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1566</td>
<td>G. Al., et al.</td>
<td><em>Gismond of Salern</em></td>
<td>1566, 1568-69</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Gentlemen of the Inner Temple</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1570</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td><em>Sir Clyomon and Clamydes</em></td>
<td>1570-93</td>
<td>romance</td>
<td>Queen’s Men (by 1599)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1583</td>
<td>Gager, W.</td>
<td><em>Dido</em></td>
<td>June 1583</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Christ Church, Oxford</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1584</td>
<td>Peele, G.</td>
<td><em>The Love of King David and Fair Bathsheba</em></td>
<td>1584-94</td>
<td>biblical history</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>Titus Andronicus</em></td>
<td>1584-94</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Pembroke’s Men (?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>Marlowe; Nashe</td>
<td><em>Dido, Queen of Carthage</em></td>
<td>1587-90</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Children of the Chapel Royal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>Marlowe, C.</td>
<td><em>Tamburlaine</em></td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men in London</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>Marlowe, C.</td>
<td>2 Tamburlaine</td>
<td>Autumn 1587</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men in London</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td><em>Master Arden of Faversham in Kent</em></td>
<td>1587-92</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>associated with members of Pembroke’s Men before 1592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title/Play</td>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Company/Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>1587-88</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Charlemagne</td>
<td>tragedy (?)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>1588-89</td>
<td>Peele, G.</td>
<td>The Battle of Alcazar</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men (by or in 1594)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1588-92</td>
<td>Greene, R.</td>
<td>James IV</td>
<td>romance</td>
<td>unknown</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1589-90</td>
<td>Marlowe, C.</td>
<td>The Jew of Malta</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Strange’s Men at the Rose (in 1592)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1589-92</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Pembroke’s Men</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1590</td>
<td>Herbert, M.</td>
<td>Antonius (translating R. Garnier)</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1590-93</td>
<td>Daniel, S.</td>
<td>Cleopatra</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>privately acted (London or Kent?)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1590-94</td>
<td>W. S. (Greene, R.?)</td>
<td>Locrine, the Eldest Son of King Brutus</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1591-93</td>
<td>Marlowe, C.</td>
<td>The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II</td>
<td>history</td>
<td>Pembroke’s Men in London (probably at the Theatre)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1591-97</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>tragedy, history</td>
<td>Derby’s Men (?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1591-1600</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Weakest Goeth to the Wall</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Oxford’s Men</td>
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<tr>
<td>1593-96</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men at the Theatre (?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1594-98</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td>King John</td>
<td>history</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men at the Theatre (presumably)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1595-97</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td>King Richard II</td>
<td>tragedy, history</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men (by 1597)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1595-99</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>A Warning for Fair Women</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men, presumably at the Theatre (or the Curtain, if the play is of later date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Company/Location</td>
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<td>1596</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>2 Henry IV</em></td>
<td>1596-1600</td>
<td>history</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men, presumably at the Theatre or Curtain</td>
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<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Dekker, T.</td>
<td><em>The Gentle Craft [The Shoemakers’ Holiday]</em></td>
<td>Summer 1599</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men at the Rose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Heywood (?) et al. (?)</td>
<td><em>1 King Edward IV</em></td>
<td>August 1599</td>
<td>history</td>
<td>Derby’s Men, perhaps at the Boar’s Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Chettle; Dekker; Haughton</td>
<td><em>Patient Grissil</em></td>
<td>February 1600</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men at the Rose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Marston, J.</td>
<td><em>Antonio’s Revenge</em></td>
<td>1600-1</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Children of Paul’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Haughton, W.</td>
<td><em>The Devil and his Dame</em></td>
<td>Summer 1600</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men at the Rose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Dekker; Haughton; Day</td>
<td><em>The Spanish Moor’s Tragedy [Lust’s Dominion]</em></td>
<td>Spring 1600</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Admiral’s Men at the Rose</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>Hamlet</em></td>
<td>1600-2</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men at the Globe</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Dekker, T.</td>
<td><em>The Unrussing of the Humorous Poet [Satiromastix]</em></td>
<td>Autumn 1601</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Chamberlain’s Men, at the Globe, and the Children of Paul’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Marston, J.</td>
<td><em>What You Will</em></td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of Paul’s (?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td><em>The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality</em></td>
<td>February 1601</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>Children of the Chapel Royal, presumably at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1601</td>
<td>Chapman, G.</td>
<td><em>Sir Giles Goosecap, Knight</em></td>
<td>1601-3</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the Chapel Royal at the Blackfriars</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Chapman, G.</td>
<td><em>All’s Well that Ends Well</em></td>
<td>c. 1601-8</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Globe (presumably)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Chapman, G.</td>
<td><em>The Gentleman Usher</em></td>
<td>1602-5</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>presumably a boy company at an indoor theatre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Performance Venue</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602-9</td>
<td>Cary, E.</td>
<td><em>Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Jonson, B.</td>
<td><em>Sejanus’ Fall</em></td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men, presumably for the Globe</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1603-4</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>The Phoenix</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of Paul’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603-4</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>Measure for Measure</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men, presumably for the Globe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603-5</td>
<td>Chapman, G.</td>
<td><em>The Widow’s Tears</em></td>
<td>1603-5</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the Queen’s Revels at the Blackfriars</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1604-6</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>A Trick to Catch the Old One</em></td>
<td>1604-6</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of Paul’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1604-7</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>Michaelmas Term</em></td>
<td>1604-7</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men, presumably at the Globe</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1605-6</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>King Lear</em></td>
<td>1605-6</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Globe</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1605-8</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>Your Five Gallants</em></td>
<td>1605-8</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the Queen’s Revels at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1606-7</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>The Puritan</em></td>
<td>1606-7</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of Paul’s</td>
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<td>1606-7</td>
<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>Antony and Cleopatra</em></td>
<td>1606-7</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Globe (presumably)</td>
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<td>Machin, L.</td>
<td><em>Every Woman in her Humour</em></td>
<td>1606-8</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the King’s Revels at the Whitefriars (?)</td>
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<td>Beaumont; Fletcher</td>
<td><em>Cupid’s Revenge</em></td>
<td>1606-11</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Children of the Queen’s Revels, presumably at the Blackfriars (or Whitefriars, if after 1608)</td>
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<td>1607</td>
<td>Armin, R.</td>
<td><em>The Two Maids of Mortlake</em></td>
<td>1607-8</td>
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<td>Children of the King’s Revels at the Whitefriars</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alexander, W.</td>
<td><em>The Alexandraen Tragedy</em></td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
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<td>Barry, L.</td>
<td><em>Ram Alley</em></td>
<td>1607-8</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the King’s Revels, presumably at the Whitefriars</td>
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<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>Coriolanus</em></td>
<td>1607-9</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars (and presumably also the Globe)</td>
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<td>Heywood; Rowley</td>
<td><em>Fortune by Land and Sea</em></td>
<td>c. 1607-9</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Queen Anne’s Men</td>
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<td><em>Annals</em></td>
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<td>1608</td>
<td>Marston; Barksted; Machin</td>
<td><em>The Insatiate Countess</em></td>
<td>1608-13</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Children of the Queen’s Revels (or, if earlier, Children of the King’s Revels) at the Whitefriars</td>
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<td><em>The Coxcomb</em></td>
<td>1608-12</td>
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<td>Children of the Whitefriars (?)</td>
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<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>The Witch</em></td>
<td>1608-16</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td><em>Cymbeline, King of Britain</em></td>
<td>1609-11</td>
<td>romance</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars and Globe</td>
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<td>Fletcher; Beaumont</td>
<td><em>The Captain</em></td>
<td>1609-12</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men, presumably at the Blackfriars and/or Globe</td>
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<td>Fletcher; Beaumont</td>
<td><em>The Scornful Lady</em></td>
<td>1609-12</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the Queen’s Revels at the Whitefriars</td>
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<td>Middleton; Rowley</td>
<td><em>Wit at Several Weapons</em></td>
<td>1609-20</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Prince Charles’s Men at the Curtain (?)</td>
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<td>1610</td>
<td>Jonson, B.</td>
<td><em>The Alchemist</em></td>
<td>1610</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars (and Globe?)</td>
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<td>Field, N.</td>
<td><em>Amends for Ladies</em></td>
<td>1610-11</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Children of the Queen’s Revels at the Whitefriars (?)</td>
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<td>Fletcher, J.</td>
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<td>1610-14</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men, presumably at the Blackfriars and/or Globe</td>
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<td>Shakespeare, W.</td>
<td><em>The Winter’s Tale</em></td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>romance</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Globe and Blackfriars</td>
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<td>Beaumont; Fletcher</td>
<td><em>A King and No King</em></td>
<td>1611</td>
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<td>King’s Men at the Globe</td>
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<td>Cooke, J.</td>
<td><em>The City Gallant [Greene’s Tu Quoque]</em></td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Queen Anne’s Men, presumably at the Red Bull</td>
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<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>No Wit, No Help Like a Woman’s</em></td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Prince’s Men, presumably at the Fortune</td>
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<td>Webster, J.</td>
<td><em>The White Devil</em></td>
<td>1611-12</td>
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<td>Queen Anne’s Men, presumably at the Red Bull</td>
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<td>Fletcher; Shakespeare</td>
<td><em>All is True [Henry VIII]</em></td>
<td>1611-13</td>
<td>history</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Globe (and presumably the Blackfriars)</td>
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<td>Brewer, A.</td>
<td><em>The Love-Sick King</em></td>
<td>1611-17</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>acted before King James in Newcastle, 1617 (?)</td>
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<td>Rowley, W.</td>
<td><em>A New Wonder, a Woman Never Vexed</em></td>
<td>1611-14</td>
<td>comedy</td>
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<td>1612</td>
<td>Webster, J.</td>
<td><em>The Duchess of Malfi</em></td>
<td>1612-14</td>
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<td>King’s Men, at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1612-15</td>
<td>S. S.</td>
<td><em>The Honest Lawyer</em></td>
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<td>Queen Anne’s Men, presumably at the Red Bull</td>
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<td>1612-17</td>
<td>Middleton; Rowley</td>
<td><em>A Fair Quarrel</em></td>
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<td>Prince Charles’s Men, presumably at the Hope</td>
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<td>1613</td>
<td>Fletcher, J.</td>
<td><em>The Night-Walkers</em></td>
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<td>Lady Elizabeth’s Men at the Hope (?)</td>
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<td>1613-14</td>
<td>Fletcher, J.</td>
<td><em>Bonduca</em></td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men, presumably at the Globe and/or Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1613</td>
<td>Middleton (&amp; Munday?)</td>
<td><em>The Triumphs of Truth</em></td>
<td>civic pageant</td>
<td>London</td>
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<td>1613-14</td>
<td>Fletcher; Shakespeare</td>
<td><em>The Two Noble Kinsmen</em></td>
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<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1613-21</td>
<td>Fletcher; Massinger</td>
<td><em>Thierry and Theodoret</em></td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>1614</td>
<td>Fletcher, J.</td>
<td><em>Wit without Money</em></td>
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<td>Lady Elizabeth’s Men at the Hope (?)</td>
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<td>1614</td>
<td>Jonson, B.</td>
<td><em>Bartholomew Fair</em></td>
<td>October 1614</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Lady Elizabeth’s Men at the Hope</td>
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<td>1614</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>More Dissemblers Besides Women</em></td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>1615</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>The Widow</em></td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars (and Globe?)</td>
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<td>1616</td>
<td>Jonson, B.</td>
<td><em>The Devil is an Ass</em></td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1616</td>
<td>Asuka Kimura</td>
<td><em>The Queen of Corinth</em></td>
<td>1616-1618</td>
<td>Tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>1617</td>
<td>Fletcher; Massinger</td>
<td><em>The Bloody Brother</em></td>
<td>1617</td>
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<td>1617</td>
<td>Webster, J.</td>
<td><em>The Devil’s Law-Case</em></td>
<td>1617-1619</td>
<td>Tragicomedy</td>
<td>Queen Anne’s Men at the Red Bull or Cockpit</td>
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<td>1618</td>
<td>Middleton; Rowley; Heywood</td>
<td><em>An/The Old Law</em></td>
<td>1618-1619</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Prince Charles’s Men</td>
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<td>1619</td>
<td>Rowley, W.</td>
<td><em>All’s Lost by Lust</em></td>
<td>c. 1619-1620 (?)</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Prince Charles’s Men (later Lady Elizabeth’s Men)</td>
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<td>1618</td>
<td>Fletcher, J.</td>
<td><em>Women Pleased</em></td>
<td>1619-1623</td>
<td>Tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>1619</td>
<td>Fletcher; Massinger</td>
<td><em>The Custom of the Country</em></td>
<td>1619-1620</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>1620</td>
<td>Wroth, M.</td>
<td><em>Love’s Victory</em></td>
<td>c. 1620</td>
<td>Pastoral Tragicomedy</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>1621</td>
<td>Dekker; Ford; Rowley</td>
<td><em>The Witch of Edmonton</em></td>
<td>1621</td>
<td>Tragicomedy</td>
<td>Prince Charles’s Men</td>
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<td>1621</td>
<td>Massinger, P.</td>
<td><em>The Duke of Milan</em></td>
<td>1621-1622</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars</td>
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<td>1621</td>
<td>Middleton, T.</td>
<td><em>Women, Beware Women</em></td>
<td>Summer 1621</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men (?)</td>
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<td>1621</td>
<td>W. R. (&amp; Middleton?)</td>
<td><em>A Match at Midnight</em></td>
<td>1621-1623</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Red Bull Company (King’s Revels’ Men) (?)</td>
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<td>1623</td>
<td>Fletcher (&amp; Massinger?)</td>
<td>The Wandering Lovers</td>
<td>lic. 6 December</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
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<td>1624</td>
<td>Drue, T.</td>
<td>The Duchess of Suffolk</td>
<td>lic. 2 January</td>
<td>history</td>
<td>Palsgrave’s Men</td>
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<td>1625</td>
<td>Webster; Rowley; Heywood</td>
<td>A Cure for a Cuckold</td>
<td>1624</td>
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<td>Prince Charles’s Men at the Red Bull</td>
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<td>1625</td>
<td>Webster; Heywood</td>
<td>Appius and Virginia</td>
<td>1625-26</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
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<td>1626</td>
<td>Massinger, P.</td>
<td>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</td>
<td>1625</td>
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<td>Queen Henrietta’s Men</td>
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<td>1627</td>
<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td>The School of Compliment [Love Tricks]</td>
<td>lic. 11 February</td>
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<td>1627</td>
<td>Ford, J.</td>
<td>'Tis Pity She’s a Whore</td>
<td>1625-33</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Queen Henrietta’s Men at the Cockpit</td>
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<td>Heywood, T.</td>
<td>A Maidenhead Well Lost</td>
<td>c. 1625-34</td>
<td>comedy</td>
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<td>1628</td>
<td>Fletcher (et al.?)</td>
<td>The Fair Maid of the Inn</td>
<td>lic. 22 January</td>
<td>tragicomedy (?)</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>Ford, J.</td>
<td>Love’s Sacrifice</td>
<td>1626-31</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>Queen Henrietta’s Men at the Cockpit</td>
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<td>May, T.</td>
<td>Antigone, the Theban Princess</td>
<td>1627-31</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
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<td>Cartwright, W.</td>
<td>The Siege, or Love’s Convert</td>
<td>1628-38</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>unacted (?)</td>
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<td>Brome, R.</td>
<td><em>The Northern Lass</em></td>
<td>1629</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Globe and Blackfriars</td>
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<td>Brome, R.</td>
<td><em>The City Wit</em></td>
<td>1629-32</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men (?)</td>
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<td>1630</td>
<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>The Constant Maid</em></td>
<td>1630(?)</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>1 Ogilby’s Men, Dublin (?)</td>
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<td>Cokain, A.</td>
<td><em>The Obstinate Lady</em></td>
<td>c. 1630</td>
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<td>1632</td>
<td>T. B.</td>
<td><em>The Country Girl</em></td>
<td>1632-c. 1633</td>
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<td>King’s Men (?)</td>
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<td>Brome, R.</td>
<td><em>The Weeding of the Covent Garden</em></td>
<td>1632-33</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>unknown</td>
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<td>Jonson, B.</td>
<td><em>The Magnetic Lady, or Humours Reconciled</em></td>
<td>1632</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars *13</td>
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<td>Shirley, J.</td>
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<td>lic. 16 November</td>
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<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>Changes, or Love in a Maze</em></td>
<td>lic. 10 January</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Revels’ Men (Prince Charles's Men (II)?)</td>
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<td><em>Hyde Park</em></td>
<td>lic. 20 April</td>
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<td>Brome, A. (?)</td>
<td><em>The Cunning Lovers</em></td>
<td>1632-39</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Beeston’s Boys</td>
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<td>1633</td>
<td>Cokain, A.</td>
<td><em>Trappolin Credato Principe, or Trappolin Supposed a Prince</em></td>
<td>1633</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>unknown</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nabbes, T.</td>
<td><em>Tottenham Court</em></td>
<td>1633-34</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Prince Charles’s Men (II), or King’s Revels’ Men</td>
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<td>1634</td>
<td>Davenant, W.</td>
<td><em>Love and Honour</em></td>
<td>lic. 20 November</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Massinger, P. (reviser)</td>
<td><em>A Very Woman, or The Prince of Tarent</em></td>
<td>lic. 6 June</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cartwright, W.</td>
<td><em>The Ordinary, or The City Cozener</em></td>
<td>1634-35</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Christ Church, Oxford (?)</td>
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<td>1635</td>
<td>Davenant, W.</td>
<td><em>News from Plymouth</em></td>
<td>lic. 1 August</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jones, J.</td>
<td><em>Adrasta, or The Woman’s Spleen and Love’s Conquest</em></td>
<td>pub. 1635</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>unacted</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>The Lady of Pleasure</em></td>
<td>lic. 15 October</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>Queen Henrietta’s at the Cockpit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brome, R.</td>
<td><em>A Mad Couple Well Matched</em></td>
<td>1635-39</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Revels’ Men at the Salisbury Court Theatre or Beeston’s Boys at the Cockpit</td>
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<td>1636</td>
<td>Brome, R.</td>
<td><em>The New Academy; or, The New Exchange</em></td>
<td>1636</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>King’s Revels’ Men at the Salisbury Court Theatre (RBO)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strode, W.</td>
<td><em>The Floating Island</em></td>
<td>29 August 1636</td>
<td>moral allegory</td>
<td>Christ Church, Oxford</td>
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<td>1637</td>
<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>The Royal Master</em></td>
<td>1637</td>
<td>comedy</td>
<td>1 Ogilby’s Men; later Queen Henrietta’s Men (lic. 23 April 1638)</td>
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<td>Glapthorne, H. (?)</td>
<td><em>Revenge for Honour</em></td>
<td>1637-41</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
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<td>1638</td>
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<td><em>The Love-Sick Court</em></td>
<td>1638</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>Queen Henrietta’s Men at the Salisbury Court Theatre (RBO)</td>
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<td>Davenant, W.</td>
<td><em>The Unfortunate Lovers</em></td>
<td>lic. 16 April</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men</td>
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<td>1639</td>
<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>The Politician</em></td>
<td>c. 1639 (?)</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>1 Ogilby’s Men (?); Queen Henrietta’s Men</td>
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<td>Nabbes, T.</td>
<td><em>The Unfortunate Mother</em></td>
<td>1639 (?)</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
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<td>Cavendish (&amp; Shirley)</td>
<td><em>The Variety</em></td>
<td>1639-42</td>
<td>comedy</td>
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<td>1640</td>
<td>Brome, R.</td>
<td><em>The Court Beggar</em></td>
<td>1640-41</td>
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<td>Beeston’s Boys at the Cockpit</td>
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<td><em>The Imposture</em></td>
<td>lic. 10 November</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
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<td>Killigrew, T.</td>
<td><em>The Parson’s Wedding</em></td>
<td>1640-41</td>
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<td>Quarles, F.</td>
<td><em>The Virgin Widow</em></td>
<td>c. 1640-42</td>
<td>tragicomedy</td>
<td>privately acted (by 1649)</td>
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<td>1641</td>
<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>The Brothers</em></td>
<td>lic. 26 May</td>
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<td>Shirley, J.</td>
<td><em>The Cardinal</em></td>
<td>lic. 25 November</td>
<td>tragedy</td>
<td>King’s Men at the Blackfriars *15</td>
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Notes to the Appendix


*4 Taylor and Lavagnino, Early Modern Contextual Culture.


*8 Taylor and Lavagnino, Early Modern Contextual Culture.

*9 Webster, Works, vol. 2.

*10 Webster, Works, vol. 2.


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