SOLITARY SPARROWS: WIDOWHOOD AND THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND, 1580-1630

By

JENNIFER ASHLEY BINCZEWSKI

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of JENNIFER ASHLEY BINCZEWSKI find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Jesse Spohnholz, Ph.D., Chair

__________________________
Susan Peabody, Ph.D.

__________________________
Steven Kale, Ph.D.

__________________________
Todd Butler, Ph.D.
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1 Romans 11:36.
SOLITARY SPARROWS: WIDOWHOOD AND THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN
POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND, 1580-1630

Abstract

by Jennifer Ashley Binczewski, Ph.D.
Washington State University
December 2017

Chair: Jesse Spohnholz

This dissertation examines the gendered nature of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Catholic community through widows’ attempts to preserve Catholicism. Catholics in post-Reformation England faced new challenges in their resolution to remain faithful to Rome following the passage of a wave of anti-Catholic laws in the 1580s. These legislative attempts to root out Catholicism resulted in the creation of a clandestine community where private households became essential sites for the survival of Catholic worship. My research extends prior studies of English women – as a general category – in the preservation of Catholicism by considering how marital status affected an individual’s ability to support and maintain the underground Catholic Church. By merging the study of widowhood with spatial analyses of Catholic households, I argue that early modern patriarchal structures provided specific opportunities inherent in widowhood that were unavailable to other men and women, whether married or single. Through their legal autonomy, economic independence, and the manipulation of gendered cultural stereotypes, many Catholic widows used their households to harbor priests, host clandestine Mass, and preserve Catholicism for future generations. This argument maintains that a broader interpretation of the role of women, one that includes an analysis of marital status, is essential to understanding the gendered nature of religious survival in the face of persecution.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A NOTE ON CITATION</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: THE HISTORICAL AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PROBLEM OF CATHOLIC WIVES</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: POWER IN VULNERABILITY: AGENCY IN THE CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORKS OF WIDOWHOOD</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: PROTECTING CATHOLICISM: WIDOWS, PRIESTS, AND BOUNDARIES OF SECLUSION</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: PROMOTING CATHOLICISM: PILLARS OF FAITH IN THE COMMUNITY</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: SUSTAINING CATHOLICISM: A LINEAGE OF SURVIVAL</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Log-Likelihood Collocate of Widow</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Log-Likelihood Collocate of Widows</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Log-Likelihood Collocate of Widowhood</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Carlton Towers</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Priest Hole at Carlton Towers</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Baddesley Clinton</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Priest Hole at Baddesley Clinton</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Map of Shifnal Manor, Shropshire, 1635</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Map of Widows’ Houses</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Dorothy Lawson’s House, St. Antony’s, Newcastle, 1934</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Remains of Dorothy Lawson’s House, 1934</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Remains of Battle Abbey, East Sussex</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Chalice and Paten, c. 1630-1650</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>A Peddler’s Trunk, 1600s</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Portrait of Anne Dacre, artist unknown</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Engraving of Anne Dacre, by Wenceslaus Hollar</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Sketch of Anne Howard, by Lucas Vorsterman</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Stonor Park</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A NOTE ON CITATION

All quotations from and citations of contemporary manuscript and print works retain original punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, although i/j, u/v, and th/y have been replaced where necessary for ease of reading. Dates are given in Old Style, except that the year is taken to begin on January 1. All scriptural citations are from the King James Bible, first published in 1611.
DEDICATION

To Nic, Olivia, and Baby B

In memory of the men and women, throughout history, who have lost their lives for their faith.
INTRODUCTION

*My Lords, nothing grieves me more but that I could not receive a thousand more.*
- Anne Line on her day of execution for harboring priests, February 27, 1601

On a February morning in 1601, the noose at Tyburn encircled the neck of a young widow found guilty of sheltering Catholic priests. As she drew near her final moments, a Catholic witness remarked that Line stated, “I am sentenced to die for harbouring a Catholic priest; and so far am I from repenting for having so done that I wish with all my soul that where I have entertained one I could have entertained a thousand.” Following her execution, Anne Line’s body was discarded into an unmarked pit, where fellow widow and priest harbore Anne Howard sent a servant to retrieve the body with the intent of giving Line a proper Catholic burial.

Anne Line’s refusal to repent, coupled with her willingness to meet her death, embodies the religious convictions of many Catholic men and women in the newly Protestant nation. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England witnessed a multitude of political, religious, and economic tensions that influenced the way Catholics lived and worshiped. Before King Henry VIII broke with Rome and before Archbishop Thomas Cranmer wrote the Protestant Book of Common Prayer, England’s religious culture revolved around saint’s days, pilgrimages, and Catholic rituals. After the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559, Catholic subjects found themselves

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4 Connelly, *Women of the Catholic Resistance*, 111. Anne Howard (1557-1630) is sometimes referred to as “Anne Dacre”, using her maiden name. However, this dissertation uses her married name, Howard.
in a Protestant realm that was increasingly fearful of those allied with Rome. Seditious Catholic books and pamphlets were tangible evidence of the continuance of the Catholic faith in the minds of some subjects.\textsuperscript{6} Rebellions and deadly plots, both real and imagined, signaled an active rejection of England’s religious trajectory. In particular, the violence of the Northern Rebellion in 1569, the attempt of the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots to oust Elizabeth from the throne, and the attempt to blow up Parliament on November 5, 1605 perpetuated the notion that Catholics were in league against the Protestant crown. In the midst of these foiled Catholic plots, together with an impending tussle with Catholic Spain and the arrival of missionary priests to English shores, reactionary legislation appeared in the 1580s that attempted to control Catholics in the realm.\textsuperscript{7} The ‘Act to Retain the Queen’s Majesty’s Subjects in Their True Obedience’ in 1581 made it treasonous for missionary priests to draw English subjects away from loyalty to the queen, it increased fines for nonattendance to parish churches, and it threatened fines or imprisonment for those who celebrated or attended Mass. The ‘Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests, and such Other like Disobedient Persons’ in 1585 declared it treason to shelter priests in England or go abroad to seminaries or convents. As a result, the increased executions of Jesuit priests and lay people forced most Catholics to make a choice between secretly maintaining their

\textsuperscript{6} For analyses of Catholic print culture, see Frances Dolan, Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) and Alexandra Walsham, “Domme Preachers”? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print,” Past and Present 168 (2000): 72-123. In an analysis of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Tessa Watt argues, through the examination of popular print culture, that the replacement of Catholic doctrine in England was gradual, not a complete overhaul of traditional piety. See Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 327.

\textsuperscript{7} John Coffey, Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689 (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Ltd, 2000), 85.
treasonous Catholic practices and dooming their soul to eternal damnation. Such legislative attempts to root out Catholicism resulted in the creation of a clandestine Catholic community in which private households became vital for the protection of Catholic priests, laity, materials, and worship.

Following the 1585 act, by 1601, 143 Catholics were executed for harboring, and similar crimes. Three were women and two were widows, including Anne Line. Her path to the scaffold began around 1594, when the Jesuit John Gerard placed Line in charge of a house in London, in which numerous priests sought refuge. Upon reflecting on the circumstances that led to her execution, Gerard wrote, “When I decided to establish the house I mentioned above I could think of no better person than her to put in charge of it. She was able to manage the finances, do all the housekeeping, look after the guests, and deal with the inquiries of strangers.” Gerard purposefully chose Line, a widow, based on her ability and availability to maintain a clandestine household. Through the example of Anne Line and others, it is the aim of this dissertation to emphasize that widowhood was more than a denotation of marital status or a signifier of women’s relationship to men. Instead, widowhood presents a vital unit of analysis that underscores specific social, cultural, and legal frameworks through which some Catholics could maneuver and manipulate in the face of religious persecution.

This dissertation considers the gendered nature of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Catholic community by examining attempts by widows to preserve the underground

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8 The first person executed for harboring priests under the statute was Marmaduke Bowes in York on November 20, 1585. Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, “The Elizabethan Priests: the Harbourers and Helpers,” Recusant History 19, 3 (1989): 229.
10 Gerard, Autobiography, 103.
Catholic Church. I argue that early modern patriarchal structures provided specific opportunities inherent in widowhood that were unavailable to other men and women, whether married or single. Many Catholic widows, through their legal autonomy, economic independence, and the manipulation of gendered cultural stereotypes, used their households to harbor priests, host clandestine Mass, and preserve Catholicism for future generations, both in England and abroad. This argument builds on previous analyses of female agency in the Catholic community to argue that a broader interpretation of the role of women, one that includes an analysis of marital status, is essential to understanding the gendered nature of religious change, resistance, and survival.

The acknowledgement that women had an important role to play in the post-Reformation Catholic community is a late-twentieth century innovation, following decades of histories that focused on the importance of male gentry and priests. Historians in the 1970s began to attribute independence of mind and action to women, and more recently, studies have argued for the primacy of wives in the subversive Catholic community. However, the reality is that widowed women overwhelmingly outnumber wives in such studies. In 1980, Hugh Aveling postulated that of the three hundred Catholic households in Yorkshire during the reign of Elizabeth, no less than two hundred were matriarchal. That is, “the ruling Catholic influence was feminine.”

What has escaped the notice of historians is the overwhelming presence of widows as heads of

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such households – a state in the female life cycle that afforded the most autonomy and power to women. In a time and place where a woman’s role in society was largely contingent on her relationship to a man, this dissertation assesses how the absence of a man created circumstances that influenced the agency of women in the early modern world.

While the first chapter will examine in detail the historiographical phenomenon of historians asserting the importance of married women in the post-Reformation Catholic community without an acknowledgement of widows, a brief historiographical introduction is useful here. Arguably, the most oft cited Catholic heroines in histories of Catholic resistance, in no particular order, are Margaret Clitherow, Dorothy Lawson, Lady Magdalen Montague, Anne Vaux, Jane Wiseman, Anne Howard, Anne Line, Elizabeth Vaux, and Elizabeth Cary. Of this list of nine, seven were widows at the peak of their involvement in the Catholic community, only one was married, and one never married.

While Catholic widows feature prominently in studies that have emerged in the last forty years on English Catholic women, widowhood itself as a unit of analysis and catalyst for agency has yet to be fully identified and presented. John Bossy remarked, in his seminal English Catholic Community in 1975, that Catholic gentlewomen “played an abnormally important part” in the history of the English Catholic community. This statement followed an analysis of Dorothy Lawson – a renowned Catholic widow.\textsuperscript{13} Marie Rowlands’ analysis of recusant women in 1985 examined the actions of ten individuals, half of whom were widows, one was married, one was unmarried, and three had an unknown marital status.\textsuperscript{14} In Christine Newman’s 1989 reappraisal of the role of women in Yorkshire, five women govern her analysis, three of whom

\textsuperscript{13} John Bossy, \textit{The English Catholic Community} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 158.

\textsuperscript{14} The term “recusant” comes from the Latin \textit{recusare} – to refuse. A recusant was an individual who refused to attend Protestant services. Marie B. Rowlands, “Recusant Women 1560-1640,” in \textit{Women in English Society 1500-1800}, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985).
were widows.\textsuperscript{15} Arthur Marotti’s\textsuperscript{16} 1999 article in \textit{Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts} examines nine “figures of resistance”, five of which were widows. Sarah Bastow and Emma Watson have more recently equated the vital and active role of women with married women, yet widows are prominent in their analyses.\textsuperscript{17} Laurence Lux-Sterritt’s\textsuperscript{18} 2011 examination of women in accounts of seventeenth-century English Catholic missionaries argues, “Priests would gain undeniable advantages from alliances with housewives.” Yet of the eight women featured in her analysis, six were widows, one never married, and only one could be considered a “housewife”.

To understand why and how a certain demographic of female Catholics had unique opportunities to contribute to the English Catholic mission, this dissertation merges the study of widowhood with spatial analyses of Catholic households as centers of resistance and Catholic preservation. One common \textit{modus operandi} unites the women who have predominated the past few decades of historiography, and that is the use of their household, a distinctly feminine sphere, to harbor priests, host Mass, educate their children in the Catholic faith, and catechize their community.\textsuperscript{19} The social, cultural, and legal frameworks surrounding widowhood granted a greater degree of agency to widows in the use of time, resources, and domestic space, particularly when compared to married women. To put it simply, marital status had a direct


impact on the presence and use of a household. Women who were culturally isolated and socially autonomous had more opportunities for clandestine actions than women encumbered with spousal expectations or familial duties.

**Methodology and Scope**

This dissertation combines the study of Catholic female agency with the study of Catholic households in a gendered and spatial interpretation of religious resistance. To do so, the study examines acts and injunctions of the Tudor and Stuart reigns, personal accounts, diaries, correspondence, biographies, plays, sermons, wills, plans and photographs of country houses and priest holes, state papers, and quarter session records. While these sources are typical in the study of Catholics in Protestant England, this analysis reads for the gendered use of domestic space and material culture for the Catholic cause, the social, religious, and oftentimes-political interactions within the Catholic household, and the ways in which gender and marital status shaped the condition and capacity of widows to wield power.

The focus on widows’ households in this dissertation relies on a definition of space that acknowledges that rooms, priest holes, and houses as a whole could be more than structure and walls, and represented more than an unambiguous definition of “place”. Instead, space was dynamic, changing, and dependent on the people and social structures that interacted within it. As Henri Lefebvre stated in his seminal work on spatial analysis, “social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others.”²⁰ Recent works on early modern England, and Europe as a whole, have utilized such a notion of space, and therefore, have contributed towards this study’s use of space. Benjamin Kaplan’s examination of

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house chapels in early modern Europe suggests that behavior and actions of individuals and groups could negotiate conceptions of public and private space. Lisa McClain has shown that Catholics could transform ordinary space into sacred space through physical separation from Protestants, ritualized actions performed within ordinary space, and interactions between peoples, which in turn created a religious community. Frances Dolan’s use of space, gender, and religion in her analysis of domestic space proposes that Catholics produced and adapted a fluid relationship to space, particularly in the household. Such analyses that examine the movement and interaction of people, spaces, and material culture are vital to this dissertation’s conception of how widowhood influenced household space. Simplified views of a house as mere bricks and walls are missed opportunities to examine how social and cultural constructions influenced and manipulated the use and conception of space. From Kaplan, McClain, Dolan, and others we can conclude that space is dynamic, it is socially constructed, adaptive and malleable by those who interacted within it, and there are political, social, and cultural consequences to conceptions of space and its use in history. Yet one element missing from these previous studies is an examination of how marital status, in addition to gender, influenced spaces used in the Catholic community. Widows’ houses operated in different economic, social, legal, and cultural frameworks than those of married women or men, and therefore presented different

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23 Dolan, “Gender and the ‘Lost’ Spaces of Catholicism.”
opportunities and limitations in the use and conception of space. Widows were free from male authority, exercised a degree of economic and social freedom, and attracted popular stereotypes of vulnerability and weakness – all characteristics that assisted attempts to preserve Catholicism. Thus, by examining marital status and spatial analysis together, this dissertation uncovers how widowhood in particular affected agency through the household. The household was one vital space where the cultural, social, and legal characteristics of widowhood merged. It was the nexus of widowhood and clandestine Catholicism, and because of this relationship, the house became the ultimate tool at the disposal of widows bent on preserving Catholic practice.

The scope of this study is limited chronologically from generally 1580 to 1630. The arrival of missionary and Jesuit priests, particularly in 1580, was the catalyst for a string of penal laws that heightened the punishment for protecting or promoting Catholic practices. It is within this period that anti-Catholic legislation and executions of Jesuits and lay Catholics was at its peak, which drove the Catholic community to the confines of the private household – the topic of this study. Penalties forced Elizabethan and early Stuart Catholics to use space adaptively for the preservation and practice of their faith, and it is during this time that Catholic widows such as Dorothy Lawson (1580-1632), Lady Magdalene Montague (1538-1608), Eleanor Brooksby (1560-1625), Jane Wiseman (d.1610), and Lady Anne Howard (1557-1630) used their houses to harbor priests, hold Mass, and preserve the Catholic community. The scope is not limited to dates that correspond to reigns of monarchs, although they naturally frame a part of the analysis. Instead, the chronology follows the life span of widows who were most active in the Catholic

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25 1630, as an end, is somewhat fluid. The lives of some widows under analysis extended beyond 1630, such as Elizabeth Cary, examined in chapter 5. Despite overextending this chronological scope in a few instances, the bulk of this study remains within the 1580 to 1630 framework.
community, which naturally envelops the years of the most active enforcement of anti-Catholic legislation.²⁷

Geographically, this study examines evidence of local Catholic preservation by Catholic widows throughout England, although the primary focal points are London, Oxfordshire, Sussex, Essex, Warwickshire, and Northumberland. By examining Catholic widows throughout England, this dissertation makes comparisons between urban and rural settings, and between nobility, gentry, and ordinary widows, evaluating thereby how the proximity to the capital influenced the strength and weakness of a particular Catholic community. This variety illumines daily interactions between Protestants and Catholics at a local and personal level, and in this case, illustrates how gender and marital status provided both opportunities and limitations within daily interactions to preserve Catholicism. While the bulk of the dissertation focuses on England, chapter five will branch out from an Anglo-centric purview to dissect the transnational movement of English Catholics, and the role of English widows in the international Catholic community. In addition, the conclusion will extend beyond the time and space of previous chapters to compare the agency of widowed women in other instances of religious persecution, including Quakers, Puritans, Jews, and Muslims from England, Germany, and Spain.

**Source Criticism**

There are inherent difficulties and necessary concessions involved with studying individuals who did not want to be found. Since this dissertation seeks to uncover traitors to the crown and those who aided and abetted such criminals, necessarily, much of the source base is

²⁷ Marie Rowlands argues that from 1620 onwards, the prosecution for recusancy sharply declined. The greatest number of executions of Catholics, particularly for harboring priests, was carried out from 1588 to 1602. The last execution of a priest in England was not until 1680. Of the forty or so individuals executed between 1630 and 1680, many were executed in 1679 for their supposed role in the fabricated Popish Plot. Rowlands, “Recusant Women”, 156. This study extends to roughly 1630, following the lives of widows such as Dorothy Lawson and Anne Howard who continued their exploits until their death.
relegated to documents that highlight individuals who failed in their efforts. Accounts of executions together with state papers that show lists of prisoners, arrest warrants, and house searches form the first layer of source material. This source base ignores those who successfully harbored priests or hosted clandestine Mass in their communities without the notice of local authorities. To account for this gap in the sources, biographies and histories of women and men, lay and ecclesiastical who labored under the penal laws of Elizabethan and Stuart England form the second layer of sources. This source base uncovers some individuals ignored by the first; however, these biographies are typically hagiographic in nature and only examine the lives of a select few – typically the wealthy and social elite. Together, these sources reveal both the successes and failures of individuals who labored against penal laws. Separately, they present their own inherent biases and complexities.

Jesuit priests and Catholic confessors wrote contemporary biographies of widows with the intent to describe women to be emulated and revered. These sources are precipitously placed in a genre that borders fact and fanfare. The women in this study harbored priests with full knowledge that doing so could mean death. They sent their children to convents abroad, forfeiting their maternal authority in service to God. Many women suffered heavy fines, imprisonment, a loss of children and kin, and two even experienced a horrendous encounter with an executioner. However, it is not the intent of this dissertation to perpetuate narratives of strength and courage, or propose facts that do not match historical evidence. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of sources created and maintained by Catholics, their family, and sympathizers, and to corroborate such narratives with alternate sources, such as state papers, arrest warrants, and correspondence from Protestant authorities.
As a brief case study, the biography of Dorothy Lawson clearly illustrates the inherent biases in source creation and preservation.\textsuperscript{28} Lawson’s story survives to the present day through the writings of William Palmes, Lawson’s Jesuit chaplain of seven years. In 1646, fourteen years after Lawson’s death, Palmes wrote an account of her life, Catholic piety, and strength in the face of adversity in a decidedly hagiographic biography. In 1855, Charles Dolman, a Catholic publisher and bookseller in London, printed the manuscript with a dedication to Sir William Lawson of Brough Hall in Richmondshire, a descendant of Dorothy Lawson.\textsuperscript{29} Dolman and William Lawson were acquainted through the Catholic Institute of Britain. The \textit{Catholic Directory and Annual Register} of 1838 indicates that William Lawson was the vice president of the Institute while Charles Dolman was a committee member.\textsuperscript{30} Footnotes written by William Lawson and the late Baronet of Brough Hall Henry Lawson exist throughout the 1855 edition of the Dolman’s publication. Thus, it appears that Dolman, who had a history of devoting himself to the publication of Catholic writings, worked with the Lawson family to publish the hagiographic biography of a widowed ancestor.\textsuperscript{31}

The perpetuation of a familial Catholic history through the centuries illumines two possible pitfalls in the use of the source due to its hagiographic and mythical nature. Dorothy Lawson’s own Jesuit priest wrote the biography more than a decade after her death, thereby purposefully proposing a hagiographic and potentially inaccurate view of a successfully pious woman. Second, when considering the embedded concerns of the nineteenth century, including a

\textsuperscript{28} William Palmes, \textit{The Life of Mrs. Dorothy Lawson of St. Antony’s Near Newcastle-on-Tyne} (London: Charles Dolman, 1855).


\textsuperscript{31} Following the failure of multiple Catholic periodicals including “The Catholic Magazine” and “Dolman’s Magazine and Monthly Miscellany of Criticism” in the 1840s, Dolman devoted himself to publishing works that had never been published by a Catholic Press. Taaffe, “Charles Dolman”, 99.
continued religious tension towards Catholics in England at the time of publication, Dorothy Lawson’s story of struggle became a convenient timeless narrative of Catholic strength in the face of persecution. The editor of the work, G. B. Richardson, maintained that the story is “so curious a picture of the life and manners of a past age…too valuable to remain unpublished.”

The nature of the source as an enduring mythical tale of a pious woman affects the validity and objectivity of the source, at the time of writing, the time of publication, and to the modern reader. William Palmes’ aim for writing the work in the seventeenth century, William Lawson’s motive for publishing a story about his own ancestor, and Charles Dolman’s incentive to publish Catholic works in a Protestant capital are serious considerations when dealing with *The Life and Times of Dorothy Lawson*. However, such detractions cannot discount the value of this biography and others in the study of widowhood and space in post-Reformation England. While the source itself may be a subjective account of a pious woman, it can reveal the role of widowhood and space in Lawson’s success in her Catholic exploits through a contextual analysis of the social, cultural, and legal environment in which she lived. The biography includes descriptions of Lawson’s household, the people who interacted within, and the materials used for Mass and other observances. In conjunction with burial registers, correspondence, and wills that discuss Lawson, a detailed narrative of her exploits and use of her household can be created. The aim of this study is not to repeat the hagiographic myths surrounding Dorothy Lawson and other Catholic widows, but to understand the reality of the cultural, legal, and social structures that accompanied widowhood and widows’ Catholic households.

Attempts to control familial narratives for religious or personal reasons may also contaminate the surviving accounts of widows. The process of production and maintenance of

sources can pollute the preservation of biography. Consider the biography of Anne Howard, a document written in the seventeenth century by her unnamed confessor, and like Dorothy Lawson’s biography, published in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{33} Arundel Castle archives house the undated manuscript from which the 14\textsuperscript{th} Duke of Norfolk, Henry Fitzalan-Howard, transcribed and published the biography \textit{The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, and of Anne Dacres his wife} in 1857 as a memento of his family’s Catholic past and in honor of Anne’s martyred husband, Philip Howard. In the preface of the printed edition, the Duke of Norfolk states that he copied the original manuscript “with the most careful attention.”\textsuperscript{34} However, also housed at Arundel Castle is a little-known manuscript believed to be dated earlier than the published transcription.\textsuperscript{35} While we cannot know if the Duke knew the earlier manuscript existed, there is evidence that both manuscripts were at Arundel Castle at the time of the Duke’s own transcription. The chaplain at Arundel Castle from 1824 to 1862, Canon Tierney, knew about the two manuscripts since he himself transcribed both around the same time of publication.\textsuperscript{36} When compared to the earlier manuscript of \textit{Lives} at Arundel Castle, the 1857 publication is short one chapter and omits a paragraph in another.\textsuperscript{37} The missing chapter details the time Father Robert Southwell spent with Anne while her husband was imprisoned in the Tower of London, while the missing paragraph discusses the patronage and connection of Philip Howard with the renowned

\textsuperscript{33} Duke of Norfolk, E.M., \textit{The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, and of Anne Dacres, his wife}, ed. from the original manuscript (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857).

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Lives}, iii.

\textsuperscript{35} Charles Newdigate argues that this manuscript was written earlier because it referred to Anne’s son, Thomas Howard, as the “last Duke of Norfolk”, whereas in the published version, there is a correction where Thomas Howard is referred to as “no longer the last Duke,” 247. The Howards were no longer Dukes after 1572, and the title was only reinstated after 1660. Thus, the manuscript from which the Duke published the biography could not have been written before 1660. C.A. Newdigate, “A New Chapter in the Life of B. Robert Southwell, S.J.,” reprinted from \textit{The Month} (March, 1931), at Arundel Castle Archives, MD 1689.


\textsuperscript{37} The missing chapter is referenced in Newdigate, “A New Chapter in the Life of B. Robert Southwell, S.J.” Newdigate’s focus is more on the relevance of the missing chapter to Southwell’s life, and not on its omission from Howard’s biography.
Protestant, John Foxe. Either the Duke knew about the earlier manuscript and made a conscious choice to omit a chapter that detailed Anne’s devotion to Robert Southwell and a passage that revealed Philip Howard’s intimate connection to John Foxe – both of which detract from honoring Philip Howard – or, he simply did not know about the other manuscript. Either way, the missing sections in the published edition suggest that contemporary motivations or mistakes can influence both early modern and modern constructions of memory.

Intentions of biographers themselves also shaped the content and preservation of the records of early modern women’s actions. Frances Dolan has argued, “Catholic women’s lives and words were only recognized as worthy of record to the extent that they conformed to or could be brought to conform to the conventions of the developing subgenre of eminent women’s biography.” The bias of their authors, the process of preservation through families and archives, and the interpretation of the reader limit the credibility of biographies. Additionally, nineteenth-century histories such as John Morris’ 1877 Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers, Henry Foley’s 1877 eight-volume Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus, Bishop Challoner’s 1878 Memoirs of Missionary Priests, and the multi-volume compilation of sources printed by the Catholic Record Society in 1916, have been used ad infinitum in histories of women in the post-Reformation Catholic community. The accuracy of such sources, together with contemporary biographies, is questionable, as is the intent and inherent biases of their nineteenth- and early twentieth-century compilations. Thus, each has been read with such limitations in mind.

38 Newdigate, “A New Chapter,” 247. Newdigate argues that is referred to as the “last Duke of Norfolk”, whereas in the quarto, there is a correction where Thomas Howard is referred to as “no longer the last Duke,” 247. The Howards were no longer Dukes after 1572, and the title was only reinstated after 1660.
Yet even the documents meant to counteract and lend legitimacy to hagiographic biographies are riddled with inaccuracies, biases, and incomplete narratives. The men who wrote official state papers, arrest warrants, and quarter session records potentially omitted details that could have assisted a study of women. Searchers, Privy Council members, spies, and Justices of the Peace no doubt maintained a number of motivations behind what they divulged and what they kept secret. The fact that numerous women are discussed in sources without reference to their marital status prevents a complete discussion of the impact of widowhood on the Catholic community. In addition, social and cultural context could shape the content of sources. As Jason Scott-Warren shows, even seemingly straightforward account books fail to be “repositories of unvarnished facts,” since even strict accounts of commodities were shaped by “cultural pressures that make them distinctly partial.” Furthermore, recent work on archives and recordkeeping suggest that even the processes inherent in archives themselves can distort our knowledge of the past. Alexandra Walsham has argued, “Too often we mine the documentary sources they house without scrutinizing the decisions about selection, arrangement, preservation and retention taken by those responsible for the care of their contents over successive generations.” Jesse Spohnholz has likewise argued that the organization of archives themselves can affect narrative structures of history and thereby influence our understanding of the past, as shown in his discovery that the famed Convent of Wesel – an event discussed in documents in numerous places.
archives – never happened. Yet, despite bias, omissions, inaccuracies, and hagiographic sentiments, and drawbacks to archival organization, these sources together provide a rare glimpse of early modern widowhood, including daily habits, struggles, insight into social, legal, and economic milieus of widowhood, and an opportunity to interpret the experience of English Catholics. This dissertation examines such sources for patterns outside of the hagiographic rhetoric, and weaves corroboration from state papers, arrest warrants, and correspondence in order to build a narrative around a historiographically marginalized demographic.

**Chapter Outline**

The dissertation is divided into two sections. The first, comprised of chapters 1 and 2, examines the broader legal, economic, and cultural contexts of widowhood in early modern England. This first section sets up numerous problems, both in the history and historiography of the English Catholic community. These include the problems Catholics faced amidst harsh penal laws, problems for widows who were forced to adapt after the death of their husbands, to new and oftentimes unique social, economic, and legal, positions – including isolation and a liminal place in society – and the cultural stereotypes associated with widowhood in general. In addition, this section suggests that modern histories marginalize the role of widows in analyses of the Catholic community – which parallels their position in early modern society. Together, these chapters provide a broad overview of the social, economic, cultural, and legal capacity and condition of early modern English Catholic widows.

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Chapter 1, “The Historical and Historiographical Problem of Catholic Wives,” examines official legislation and local enforcement of penal laws from roughly 1580 to 1620, and reviews modern histories of the English Catholic community. It argues that there was a gendered strategy in post-Reformation legislation against Catholics, one that desired the outward conformity of the ‘conforming male’ above all else. The proximity and influence of the ‘wayward wife’ to the religious consciences of their husbands slowly resulted in attempts by Elizabeth and her council to control Catholic wives, while largely ignoring the threat of the Catholic widow. The perception of authorities that wives posed a greater threat to tempting conforming men than widows, because of the intimate nature of the marital relationship, has infiltrated histories of the English Catholic community to a point that agency through widowhood has been largely ignored. Thus, this parallel historical and historiographical analysis uncovers why there was a legislative focus on Catholic wives in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which translated into a focus on married women in modern histories of the English Catholic community. The aim of chapter one is to provide a legal context for the post-Reformation English Catholic community, while shifting the focus in historiography towards an inclusion of marital status as a viable unit of analysis.

Chapter 2, “Power in Vulnerability: Agency in the Cultural, Economic, and Social Frameworks of Widowhood,” examines early modern depictions of widowhood as seen in popular and elite print culture in order to discuss early modern attitudes toward widows, in addition to analyzing the distinctive social and economic conditions associated with widowhood. The chapter argues that the perceived cultural stereotypes and disadvantages of widowhood, combined with widows’ social and economic independence, produced unique opportunities for widows to harbor priests – a strategy recognized by both Jesuit priests and Protestant authorities.
Competing stereotypes of widows as chaste, pious, and solitary, together with vulnerable, weak, and dangerous, depicted this group of women in early modern England as both destitute and socially outcast; identities that were advantageous to Catholic widows who desired to remain invisible to Protestant authorities. The advantages of widowhood were tangibly manifested in the form of the household – a space bequeathed through a husband’s will, controlled and maintained by the widow, isolated from male hierarchy, and dedicated for Catholic use. The widow’s house was where the legal ambiguity of Catholic widows, cultural isolation through stereotypes, possibilities for economic autonomy, and actions of religious conscience all merged to create a space ripe for Catholic survival efforts. Together, chapters one and two recognize the possibilities for Catholic subversion within widows’ unique social, economic, cultural, and legal positions, while the second section shows the realization of these possibilities.

The second section of the dissertation, chapters 3, 4, and 5, examines how the patriarchal structures of the first section affected widows’ efforts to protect, promote, and sustain Catholicism, both in England and abroad. These three chapters bring into sharper relief the legal ambiguity, cultural stereotypes, and economic autonomy outlined in the first two chapters. They examine the lives of more than sixty widows who, in spite of and at times due to their liminal status in society, manipulated, used, or adapted patriarchal structures to harbor priests, host clandestine Mass, and sustain Catholicism both locally and abroad. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are organized spatially, beginning in chapter three with the internal privacy of the household, moving outwards in chapter four into the local community, and culminating in chapter five with a discussion of transnational movements of people and resources by Catholic widows.

Chapter 3, “Protecting Catholicism: Widows, Priests, and Boundaries of Seclusion,” provides a history of widows who harbored priests. The act of harboring was secretive,
exclusive, private, and relied on a certain veil of secrecy and protection around the household. The chapter argues that the contemporary legal, economic, and cultural structures surrounding widowhood created a gendered and culturally constructed space in a widow’s house, which offered a certain agency specific to widowhood. The legal ambiguity, economic independence, and perception of widows as vulnerable outsiders influenced both the perception and the suspicion of widows’ houses as centers of harboring. In this way, widowhood created both physical and psychological barriers between Catholic households and Protestant authorities – unique additional layers of privacy in the act of priest harboring, specific to widows’ gender and marital status. The chapter’s aim is to examine widows’ efforts to protect Catholicism through the manipulation of both space and cultural definitions of such space, contingent on their gender and widowhood.

Chapter 4, “Promoting Catholicism: Pillars of Faith in the Community,” moves past the private, internal workings of the household and opens to the threshold of the house and local neighbors by analyzing the relationship between widows’ houses and the surrounding community. This chapter examines how widows adapted and transformed their households into semi-public spheres of influence by choosing to open their household for communal Mass, thereby inviting local Catholics into their home. The chapter also examines widows’ agency within the local community by examining widows’ efforts to catechize, support, and convert their neighbors. Chapter 4 argues that Catholic households were a permeable, semi-public space where widows simultaneously encouraged a clandestine community while protecting itself from outsiders. While this sphere of influence occupied spaces typically considered public and private, as it included households, neighbor’s houses, and streets, the structures of widowhood and the nature of the interactions within that space transformed and blurred lines of privacy to both
dichotomously protect and promote Catholicism. Holding Mass within the house was inclusive, semi-public, and required an adaptive notion of domestic space as ritual space – all characteristics of space that were different from the act of harboring priests. While chapter three examines the protection of Catholicism through the manipulation of space, chapter four investigates the promotion of Catholicism through the adaptation of space.

Chapter 5, “Sustaining Catholicism: A Lineage of Survival,” moves beyond the household, leaving behind the private priest holes and local community to examine possibilities for transnational efforts to maintain the English Catholic community inherent in widowhood. Unconfined by national boundaries, some widows participated in cross-Channel connections based on the similar goal to sustain English Catholicism. This chapter argues that widows’ households in England were part of a larger international English Catholic network through local efforts to print secret Catholic material, supply convents and schools abroad with children from English Catholic households, and protect and sustain the Jesuit mission both within and outside of England through patronage. The actions of sending children abroad, printing Catholic texts, and participating in patronage served to sustain Catholicism for future generations, while harboring priests and hosting clandestine Mass worked to protect and promote Catholicism in the present.

The conclusion reflects on the gendered nature of religious change and resistance and provides other examples of widows who used domestic space to combat religious persecution, apart from the early modern English Catholic example. This approach extends the analysis of the impact of widowhood on religious change both geographically and temporally. First, Puritan and

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44 The entanglement of English Catholics with Catholic communities on the continent perhaps questions the nature of an “English” Catholic community, constrained by geographic boundaries. See John Bossy’s *The English Catholic Community.*
Quaker widows from post-Reformation England who used their houses as private meeting places provides a comparative analysis to the study of post-Reformation Catholic widows, and speaks to the larger influence of gender on resistance to religious change. In addition, religious intolerance in early modern Spain, particularly towards Muslim Moriscos provides a broader geographic and cultural comparison for the opportunities provided by widowhood for religious preservation. By applying an analysis of widowhood outside of England, and extending it beyond its Catholic scope, the conclusion suggests a greater significance for the study of marital status in histories of survival amidst religious persecution.

Before beginning the first chapter on the Elizabethan legislative agenda towards English Catholics, there are a few necessary caveats regarding the scope of the study. I do not pretend to understand or empathize with the potential grief associated with losing a spouse, protector, and partner. The goal of this study is not to understand familial structures, the love and emotional connection between spouses, the meaning of marriage, or the grief that could accompany widowhood in early modern Europe. Instead, the objective is to examine the social and cultural structures that accompanied marital status and the loss of a male partner, and propose how these structures manipulated space to protect a minority community. Specifically, the goal is to uncover how widowhood in particular, as a marital status with unique social, cultural, economic, and legal frameworks, helps to understand the history of the role of women in the English Catholic community.

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Likewise, it is not the intent to argue that widows were the largest and most effective demographic of priest harborers or Catholic dissidents. To be sure, many women experienced great loss, even to the point of losing their lives for their treasonous actions, and an even greater number of men were active in the Catholic community. The purpose of this dissertation is to highlight the variety of opportunities and limitations brought on by widowhood that were unavailable to other Catholics within early modern England. It sheds light on a gendered aspect of the post-Reformation Catholic community that has previously not been examined. In regards to gender, the scope of the study is on widows and not widowers, for the simple reason that male widowers had a very different social, legal, and cultural experience than female widows in early modern England. Being a widower was not a social category for men as it was for women. As Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner state, the widower “was not inundated with advice on his conduct, the remembrance of his first wife, or the administration of the estate.” Women who lost a spouse inspired greater cultural anxiety, occupied a liminal social status, and were met with deeper stereotypes of vulnerability than male widowers. Widows were independent women without the protection and authority of men. Aside from the potential accompanying grief, questions of remarriage, and care for children, widowers did not experience a dramatic change in social identity or legal position. That is not to say that men do not feature in this analysis. To be sure, priests, Jesuits, sons, husbands, male family members, and male officials feature.

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48 The rate of remarriage by widowers was a constant throughout medieval and early modern Europe and on average, widowers remarried more often and more quickly than widows, see Margaret Pelling, “Finding widowers: men without women in English towns before 1700,” in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, 37-54 (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1999). In addition, widowers had fewer restrictions (e.g. social, cultural, religious) regarding remarriage than widows. As Lyndal Roper suggests, marriage had a connection with men’s’ political capacity in ways different from women. See Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 31.
prominently. As Frances Dolan suggests, “Catholicism, despite its commitment to clerical celibacy and sex-segregated religious communities, was fundamentally heterosocial.”

Men are part of the discussion, yet the focus of the study is on the gender specific cultural, social, and legal attributes of female widows that were manipulated into a unique agency.

Furthermore, the women in this study differed greatly. Some were nobility, while others were ordinary people. Some benefited from extensive Catholic networks and kinship, while others persevered against the wishes of Protestant family members. What these women have in common is that they adapted in the face of personal tragedy to manipulate, modify, and make use of their surroundings to protect, promote, and sustain their faith. As a brief introduction to some of these women, consider the young widow Eleanor Brooksby, who rented the country house Baddesley Clinton from the Ferrers family while Henry Ferrers was imprisoned for his presumed role in the Gunpowder Plot. Under Brooksby’s supervision, the house became a secret meeting place for Jesuit priests. The priest holes constructed to conceal them remain in the house to this day.

Jane Wisemen of London leased her house to Catholic clergy and used it as a haven for Catholic missionaries. Lady Magdalen Montague maintained a famed Catholic household, one that reportedly hid priests even during a weeklong visit from Queen Elizabeth in 1591. Lady Magdalen’s confessor and biographer maintained that Montague increased her zeal in supporting the Catholic faith only following the death of her husband. There were oftentimes upwards of 120 Catholics who attended Mass in her house, to the point that Lady Magdalen’s house earned

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52 Connelly, Women of the Catholic Resistance, 133.
the nickname “little Rome”. The following chapters examine these and more than sixty other widows who actively participated in various activities to preserve Catholicism, and reveal a connection between widowhood and the preservation of the English Catholic community.

In a society in which marital status had such a significant impact on the experience of a woman, considering marital status is critical to understanding women’s agency in a patriarchal society. Early modern society distinguished widows from other women legally, economically, and socially. A widow was autonomous according to the law. Oftentimes widows gained property and resources from their husbands’ wills, and inspired anxiety in society due to their social and economic independence. While widowhood, in history and historiography, is generally considered a weak, liminal, or potentially threatening status for women, in the harsh realities of a clandestine religious minority community, these weaknesses became catalysts for action and power in the face of persecution.

54 Smith, An Elizabethan Recusant House, 43.
CHAPTER ONE:

THE HISTORICAL AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PROBLEM OF CATHOLIC WIVES

Since far greater is the fever of a woman once resolved to evil than the rage of man, I humbly beseech your Lordship that the sex of women be not overlooked.

- Richard Topcliffe, priest hunter, 1592

In 1592, famed priest hunter and torturer Richard Topcliffe wrote a letter to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, pleading for Elizabeth I’s chief advisor to recognize the dangers posed by Catholic women to the religious uniformity of the realm. Topcliffe had spent the last decade hunting English Catholics who feigned or forfeited allegiance to the Elizabethan religious settlement, and based on his experience, he claimed that women posed a serious threat. He stated, “Whether she be wife, widow, maid or whatever…far greater is the fever of a woman once resolved to evil than the rage of man, I humbly beseech your Lordship that the sex of women be not overlooked.” He maintained that each of these Catholic women was “furnished of a hosty priest (harbored in her closet)” in their frequent attempts to “harbor, receive, and relieve priests” or other “lusty Catholic champion[s]”. For this reason, he argued that women, married as well as widows, were “needful to be shut up (in effect) as much as men.”

The realization that Catholic women, along with men, posed a real threat to religious conformity was an organic development amidst local authorities that eventually reached the Privy Council, in reaction to the large number of female recusants and Protestant anxieties about their potential impact on the conforming populace. What followed this slow realization at the local level were reactionary

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57 Discourse of an unnamed person, 1592, BL Lansdowne MS 72/48.
penal laws from 1580 to 1620 set to enforce conformity of all subjects in post-Reformation England.

From the side of the Catholics, the active involvement and dependence on women for the survival of Catholicism was a natural reaction to the penal laws of the 1580s. In the wake of the English Reformation, these late-sixteenth century legislative attempts to root out Catholicism resulted in the creation of a clandestine community in which private households became vital for the protection of Catholic worship. The responsibility for the maintenance and practice of Catholic rites often fell into the feminine sphere where women could and did take the initiative to facilitate the family’s religious practices.58 For this reason, John Bossy argued in 1975 that the Catholic gentlewoman “played an abnormally important part” in the history of the English Catholic community.59 While the acknowledgement that women could be active agents and not just passive participants in religious change and resistance is a welcome historiographical shift due to the inclusion of women and gender studies of the 1970s, there is a problem inherent in both the early modern sources and later historiographical trends. The rhetoric from early modern correspondence and legislation regarding the threat women posed to religious conformity shows a concern with one particular group of women – Catholic wives. Married women benefited from a legal coverture from their husbands, which protected their religious deviance. As a result, over the past forty years, many historians have equated the active role of “women” with the role of “wives” in Catholic preservation, with little acknowledgement of distinctions between women based on marital status.60 Emma Watson’s assertion in 2007 that “the importance of women in

60 For studies that highlight the role of women in Catholic preservation, see Sister Joseph Damien Hanlon, “These but women” in From Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly, ed. Charles
maintaining the old faith steadily increased, albeit with the collusion of their husbands,” illustrates the all too easy assumption that all influential Catholic women had a husband beside them. Since local authorities, the Privy Council, Lord Burghley, and eventually modern historians focused on the role of wives, the actions of widows have been obscured. In fact, marital status created unique opportunities and limitations for women, thus, it is impossible to equate the experience, actions, and possibilities of all women. This chapter serves to examine why there has been such a focus on the role of wives, both in the history and historiography of the post-Reformation Catholic community, together with a disregard for the active role of single women and widows.

Beginning with the religious settlement of 1559, Elizabethan and early Stuart legislation had a gendered strategy, one that desired the outward conformity of men above all else. When conversations about women potentially infecting the conformity of the realm began in the 1580s, the central focus was the proximity and potentially dangerous influence of the ‘wayward wife’ to the religious consciences of their husbands. Thus, both official and unofficial conversations revolved around controlling wives, while ignoring the threat of the Catholic widow. The perception of authorities that wives posed a greater threat to tempting conforming men away from the Church of England than widows, due to the intimate nature of the marital relationship,


61 Watson, “Disciplined Disobedience?” 301.
meant that widows – a socially isolated demographic – were in large part disregarded from the Elizabethan legislative agenda. As *femme soles*, they were culpable under the law, therefore there was no reason to be anxious about their actions and convictions. This chapter argues that the historical focus on Catholic wives, in early modern legislation and correspondence, disproportionately influenced the focus of later histories written about female agency in the post-Reformation English Catholic community. Understanding the gendered agenda of the Elizabethan and early Stuart penal laws reveals a misunderstanding of the role of Catholic widows.

This chapter is divided into two sections to show the cause and effect of how the rhetoric of sources can influence the interpretation of history. The first section examines official legislation, together with correspondence that reveals anxieties amidst local enforcers of Elizabethan and early Stuart anti-Catholic laws. This legislation was a reaction to both internal and external threats by Catholics, either real or perceived, to state security. The foremost priority of both Elizabeth I and James I regarding Catholics was to ensure outward conformity. Following numerous plots against Elizabeth’s life, the influx of missionary priests in the early 1580s, and an impending war with Catholic Spain, there became a need for more rigorous legislation that aimed to control the active defiance of Catholics. For James, his need for conformity came on the heels of the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605. In this new moment, Catholic wives became the priority of much of the new legislation, due to their perceived ability to influence the consciences of the “conforming male.” Correspondence from local authorities throughout England suggest that there were jurisdictional issues over the punishment of Catholic wives with conforming husbands, coupled with a fear that such Catholic wives could sway the conformity of their husbands. By focusing on the threat of wives, the legislation and the local
enforcement of this legislation left the religious convictions and actions of Catholic widows relatively ignored.

The second section departs from the legislation and local anxieties of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and instead turns to examine how histories of the Catholic community written within the last five decades have mirrored the early modern focus on Catholic wives. Despite the overwhelming evidence of active Catholic widows, particularly in the act of priest harboring, written histories have equated the importance of the Catholic “woman” to the Catholic “wife”, without a clear discussion of widows. Such a narrow view of women, one that disregards marital status as a factor of analysis, fails to recognize that widows had a vastly different economic, social, and legal status as a *femme sole* from that of their married counterparts, a status that proved useful to Catholic preservation. The purpose of this chapter is to show that the historical and historiographical focus on Catholic wives is problematic for understanding the reality of how marital status complicated and assisted efforts to protect, promote, and sustain Catholicism in England.

**A Gendered Reformation: The Legislation of Post-Reformation England**

Sixteenth-century England witnessed a multitude of political, religious, and economic tensions that affected the position of Catholics in the realm. Before King Henry VIII broke with Rome and before Archbishop Thomas Cranmer wrote the Protestant Book of Common Prayer, England’s religious culture revolved around saint’s days, pilgrimages, and Catholic rituals. The

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religious turnstile of the reigns of the Protestant Edward VI, the brief sojourner of Lady Jane Grey, and the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary ended with the ascension of Elizabeth I and her Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy. It has been frequently suggested that with this settlement, Elizabeth I had no desire to create a “window into men’s souls”, and that these acts were focused on outward conformity, not internal conviction.

In fact, historians have argued that the early reign of Elizabeth I was plagued more by troubles from her Protestant subjects than Catholics. In fact, Elizabeth I and her council partially expected that popery and Catholicism would simply wither away.

However, after the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559, numerous plots and rebellions signaled that Catholicism would not weaken, which landed Catholic subjects in a realm that was increasingly fearful of those allied with Rome. The violence of the Northern Rebellion in 1569 revealed that Catholics were dangerous when left unchecked. Pope Pius V’s excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570 created a catch-22 for subjects struggling to choose an allegiance to Rome or to the crown. The arrival of missionary priests to English shores in 1580 was an act of active resistance to religious conformity. The Babington Plot of 1586 to assassinate Queen Elizabeth and replace her with the Catholic Queen Mary of Scots threatened the stability of the realm while the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 acted as a sign that God favored Protestant England over Catholic Spain. Anti-Catholicism continued to grow following the attempt to blow

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64 Kenneth Campbell, *Windows into Men’s Souls: Religious Nonconformity in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012). As a further example, Queen Elizabeth I wrote to the Justices of Assize in the county of Norfolk in August of 1585 that Lady Lovell and her son should be released from imprisonment, since they were initially imprisoned for “cause of conscience”. *The Queen to the Justices of Assize in the county of Norfolk, and others* (25 August 1585), at the National Archives, London, SP 12/181 f. 210.

up Parliament on November 5, 1605. Catholic activist Guy Fawkes led the plot, which perpetuated the notion amidst Protestant subjects that Catholics continued to be in league against the Protestant crown.

Throughout this period of religious and political unrest, reactionary legislation appeared under the reign of Queen Elizabeth that attempted to control Catholics in the realm.\(^6^6\) The following analysis traces Elizabethan legislation from 1559 to the decade following the ascension of James I to reveal that on the official and local level, penal laws had a gendered strategy. At first, the focus was on outward conformity from male subjects, with little regard to the conformity of women. In reaction to a heightened “Catholic problem” in the 1580s, an impending war with Spain, and the arrival of missionary priests, Elizabethan legislation tightened around the culpability of Catholic wives – women who were in a position to influence the conformity of men and therefore perpetuate nonconformity. This evolving yet consistently gendered nature of Elizabethan penal laws shows the desired production of the ‘conforming male’ and careful control of the ‘wayward wife’ and ignored the threat of the Catholic widow – a woman with a perceived liminal affect on the conformity of English men.

This push for outward conformity began in April of 1559 with two English parliamentary acts, which positioned the legislative agenda of Elizabeth I as a response to the decades of internal religious and political turmoil enacted by her father, Henry VIII. The first act established Elizabeth as the supreme governor in all things temporal and ecclesiastical within the dominion of the English crown, while the second launched a uniform religion, centered around the Book of Common Prayer, separating the realm of England from the conflicting Catholic and Protestant

factions on the continent. The Elizabethan Settlement has been a popular topic of study as historians have worked to uncover the legislation’s creation, purpose, impact, and significance.67 J.E. Neale examined the pressure from the Protestant left wing on Elizabeth’s own desire to provide a via media for England’s subjects.68 G.R. Elton characterized Elizabeth’s initial legislation as an effort of “consolidation and development” from previous reforms already enacted under her father, Henry VIII.69 Peter Marshall argues that these two acts were the defining characteristics of the Elizabethan Church of England.70 While these previous histories examine what the acts and injunctions meant for royal authority and religion in the realm, these analyses become more complicated when considering the gendered nature of early modern English society. For who were these acts written, how did they affect women, and what does that say about the agenda of Elizabethan legislation? As will be shown, the language and intent of both the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity show a desire to create a conforming male populace without a clear regard for the female religious consciences of the day – an agenda that would change with the rising Catholic threat in the 1580s.

Beginning with the Act of Supremacy, Elizabeth I declared that all ecclesiastical matters fell under the jurisdiction of the crown and proposed control over ecclesiastical persons. By stating that the crown was supreme in all things ecclesiastical, removing all authority from Rome, religion came under the direct control of the monarch and all subsequent rulers of the realm. The first declaration within the Supremacy Act was to revive previous acts from both


69 Elton, England Under the Tudors, 263.

Henry VIII and Edward VI, while repealing the Heresy Act of the Catholics Philip and Mary. Within the first few paragraphs, the purpose of the act is stated as “putting away of all usurped and foreign powers and authorities out of this your realm, and other your highness’s dominions and countries.”\textsuperscript{71} Per its title, the primary focus of the act was to cast off all ties with Rome, while instating supremacy in all things temporal and ecclesiastical to the crown of England. Not only did the act forbid the encroachment of foreign powers, but also it exonerated the subjects of the realm from “exactions and impositions heretofore paid to the see of Rome.”\textsuperscript{72} The act, therefore, called for submission from all of the clergy to the royal majesty, and cut off all ties with foreign powers, whether temporal or ecclesiastical.

Furthermore, the act required that all ecclesiastical persons swear an oath to a new, uniform religion, thereby pledging allegiance to the monarch instead of to Rome. Elizabeth I required that all subjects who held any spiritual or ecclesiastical benefice, promotion, dignity, office, or ministry to declare an oath that stated that the queen’s highness was the only supreme governor of the realm. This first step of action was limited to specific male subjects of the realm, since only certain men held an ecclesiastical office or a benefice. The oath asked the individual to state that they “Forsake all foreign jurisdictions, powers, superiorities, and authorities and do promise that from henceforth I shall bear faith and true allegiance to the queen’s highness.”\textsuperscript{73}

However, the Supremacy Act did not stop at requiring all ecclesiastical persons to swear an oath. Any person offered a promotion had to declare the oath before they could take office, any person holding an office in 1559 had to swear the oath or risk losing their office, and anyone refusing to take the oath was denied both their office and all that accompanied it. The act also

\textsuperscript{71} “Elizabeth’s Supremacy Act restoring Ancient Jurisdiction, &c.” in Documents Illustrative of English Church History, eds. Henry Gee and W.J. Hardy (London: MacMillan and Co., 1914), 442.
\textsuperscript{72} Gee & Hardy, “Supremacy Act”, 444.
\textsuperscript{73} Gee & Hardy, “Supremacy Act”, 449.
asked for all persons who entered the queen’s service, took Holy Orders, or were to be awarded university degrees to take the oath. The act was also clear on the punishments that awaited all persons who taught, preached, or directly affirmed the authority, spiritual or ecclesiastical, of foreign persons. Thus, the act not only applied to those who held ecclesiastical office, but to the laity as well. The language of the act claims “any person or persons dwelling or inhabiting within this your realm, or in any other your highness’s realms or dominions, of what estate, dignity, or degree soever [sic]” had to submit to the Supremacy Act. Thus, if anyone, regardless of his social status, denied the supremacy of the crown, they would “forfeit and lose unto your highness, your heirs and successors, all his and their goods and chattels, as well real as personal.” Punishment for such a crime could escalate to the charge of high treason and death, if one was to deny the supremacy of the crown three or more times. The purpose of the Act of Supremacy was to place Elizabeth and all subsequent rulers as head of the English Church, requiring a number of individuals to swear an oath of allegiance. However, those required to swear an oath — ecclesiastical persons, university graduates, those taking Holy Orders, those who entered the Queen’s service — were men, since even the most conforming of women could not hold office or be awarded a university degree. Even though the act stated that “all subjects” had to submit, the only people required to outwardly conform and pledge allegiance were certain lay and clerical men.

In comparison, the purpose of the Act of Uniformity was to instate a “uniform order of common service and prayer, and of the administration of sacraments, rites, and ceremonies in the

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75 Gee & Hardy, “Supremacy Act”, 452.
76 Gee & Hardy, “Supremacy Act”, 452.
77 Gee & Hardy, “Supremacy Act”, 452.
Church of England, which was set forth in one book, entitled: The Book of Common Prayer.”

This attempt at religious uniformity under the Book of Common Prayer repealed Queen Mary’s annulment of Edward VI’s Act of Uniformity that focused on the previous Book of Common Prayer. Thus, much like the Act of Supremacy, the agenda of the Act of Uniformity was to repeal the legislation of the Catholic Mary, while reverting to the reformed religion of Edward VI. The fact that this act was passed directly after the Act of Supremacy shows the complementary nature of the Elizabethan Settlement.

The Act of Uniformity gave complete jurisdiction to ecclesiastical persons to retain “full power and authority by this Act to reform, correct, and punish by censures of the Church, all and singular persons which shall offend within any their jurisdictions or dioceses.” Yet the Act of Uniformity moved beyond dictating clerical sovereignty by regulating where the laity ought to attend worship. The act stated that all persons should go to their parish church.

All and every person and persons inhabiting within this realm, or any other the queen’s majesty’s dominions, shall diligently and faithfully, having no lawful or reasonable excuse to be absent, endeavor themselves to resort to their parish church or chapel accustomed, or upon reasonable let thereof, to some usual place where common prayer and such service of God shall be used in such time of let, upon every Sunday and other days ordained and used to be kept as holy days…upon pain of punishment by the censures of the Church.

The act maintains that people may worship in their “usual place” of common prayer, yet strongly encouraged people to attend their parish church. Those who refused to attend Protestant services were indicted as “recusants”, a term derived from the Latin recusare meaning “to refuse”. In the following decades, those who refused to attend their Protestant services would be faced with fines, imprisonment, or both for their disobedience. However, at the start of the Elizabethan

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81 Gee & Hardy, “Act of Uniformity”, 463.
Settlement, only men were responsible for their wives’ recusancy and women were not culpable for their own actions. Altogether, the two most significant initial acts of the Elizabethan reign revealed an agenda to create a clear outward conformity in both speech and action – from men. The Act of Supremacy required that persons swear an oath of allegiance to the monarch as supreme governor over things temporal and ecclesiastical, although this was reserved for the male subjects of the realm. The Act of Uniformity specified that all persons should go to their parish church, and clarified that these acts apply to all persons, notwithstanding previous privileges of the past, yet only men were culpable for their actions. The Elizabethan Settlement set the stage for a legislative agenda that desired to create a uniform religion, uniting the realm against religious dissention under the supremacy of the crown, all centered on the male populace.

Following the Elizabethan Settlement, the Queen and her advisors expected that time would complete the Reformation. Without access to Catholic rites, worship spaces, and priests, eventually the popery of the past would die out. Elliot Rose argued that even for a decade after the Settlement, Elizabeth and her advisors were in no hurry to “force religious conservatives into line.” However, the 1580s presented a watershed in the agenda of Elizabethan legislation. Before the 1580s, the highest concern was maintaining and facilitating outward conformity. After the 1580s, the legislative agenda began an offensive attack against those who would endanger the stability of England, or the conformity and loyalty of English subjects. Individuals who heard or performed Mass, harbored priests, refused to attend Protestant services, or engaged in other Catholic rituals could suffer fines, imprisonment, or even death for their treasonous actions. The backdrop to these reactionary laws and proclamations was a growing fear of

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82 Rose, *Cases of Conscience*, 234.
83 Rose, *Cases of Conscience*, 234.
Catholics in the realm. As previously discussed, the 1580s, in particular, presented two threats to national security from the Catholic front – the arrival of Catholic missionary priests to English shores in June of 1580, and a looming war with Catholic Spain. Queen Elizabeth I, her Privy Council, and in particular her chief advisor William Cecil, Lord Burghley drafted reactionary legislation as an attempt to manage Catholics in the realm. However, these laws still aimed to create a conforming male populace above all else.

The first in this series of laws was the ‘Act to Retain the Queen’s Majesty’s Subjects in Their True Obedience’, passed in 1581. This act made it a treasonous offence for missionary priests to draw English subjects away from their loyalty to the queen towards loyalty to Rome. In addition, fines increased for nonattendance to parish churches from 12 pence to 20 pounds.\(^{84}\) This act, in one fell swoop, attempted to discourage the incursion of missionary priests while instating a crippling financial punishment to those who refused to go to church. Yet, early modern England’s gender hierarchy constrained and confused the implementation of this act. Family life in early modern England exhibited a clear hierarchy, with the husband as the head of the household just as the sovereign was at the head of the state.\(^{85}\) A wife maintained a *femme couverte* status, which meant that her husband was responsible for both her control and protection. Therefore, at first, only husbands were responsible to pay the fine if their wives refused to attend church. The state could not interfere in family affairs and men were accountable for their wives’ disobedience, which left sheriffs confused and at times conflicted regarding the implementation of the new laws against Catholic wives. Ironically, some Justices

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\(^{84}\) 12 pennies is equivalent to one shilling. There were 20 shillings to the pound, so fine for recusancy increased by a multiple of 33 times.

had recusant wives themselves. While Justices of the Peace could fine husbands for their religious deviance, wives were untouchable despite their indictments and convictions, due to the coverture of their husbands. Marie Rowlands argued that Lord Burghley “knew that the root of their difficulties lay with the failure to enforce the law against obstinate and influential wives in respect that by their example whole families refuse to resort to Church and continue in recusancy.” A letter written in 1581 in the records of the Privy Council reveals that a husband could even be imprisoned for their wife’s refusal to conform since he, in a sense, failed to “rule over his wife’s peevish disposition.” Thus, in 1581, if a wife refused to attend church, her husband was the one punished with fines or imprisonment.

A few outlying examples from the papers of the Privy Council show that some local officials found it necessary to hold wives accountable for their own actions. In July of 1580, Lord Sheffield appeared before the Lord Bishop of Lincoln and the other Commissioners for Causes Ecclesiastical in the county in order to speak for his wife’s religious conformity. Such a gesture of coverture would have been commonplace since Lord Sheffield was in charge of his wife’s actions. Despite his assurance that Lady Sheffield was now conformable in religion, the Lord Bishop required that she appear herself, that he might “take some pains to confer with her

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86 A 1587 list of Justices of the Peace shows individual men who were left out of their commission in several counties because of their wives’ recusancy. This list reveals how a wife’s action could negatively affect the husband. Such a document also notes the widespread geographical scope of recusancy with a total of sixteen counties. See Names of Justices of the Peace left out of commission in several counties on account of their wives recusancy, 1587, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/206, f. 177.

87 Rowlands, “Recusant Women,” 151.

88 Rowlands, “Recusant Women”, 153. Although it is a bit unclear why only wives are pinpointed as having the ability to sway a household, especially when considering the number of households run by widows.

89 16 February, 1580, Whitehall, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/13, f. 309.

and to certify unto their Lordships what he findeth concerning her said conformity." The Lord Bishop’s desire to speak to Lady Sheffield herself regarding her religious convictions signaled a possible shift in the jurisdiction of the state over the female mind. Lord Sheffield was unable to speak for his wife; instead, the Lord Bishop sidestepped his husbandly authority and directly questioned the woman herself. The independence of mind and action in Lady Sheffield, as reflected in the Bishop’s treatment of her recusancy, would not become commonplace for at least another decade.

Despite the example of Lady Sheffield, official legislation still followed a male-centered agenda of religious conformity. In 1583, the same year as the Throckmorton Plot – another foiled English Catholic plot to assassinate the Queen and replace her with Mary Queen of Scots – Lord Burghley argued before the Privy Council that all subjects indicted for recusancy should be required to take the Oath of Supremacy or be imprisoned. He also argued to ban lawyers, clergy, heads of colleges, and physicians from their professions unless they conformed, and he pushed to expel recusants from the Inns of Court and Chancery. Lord Burghley’s memorandum reveals a continued male-centered strategy to control and expel male recusants of a particular social status from the public realm in order to maintain internal security in the face of Catholic plots and conspiracies. Women were not required to take an oath, they could not be lawyers, clergy or physicians, and they were not present in the Inns of Court and Chancery, thus, yet again, they were absent from this memorandum, as were men for that matter who did not fall in such professions. Thus, both the 1581 Act requiring higher fines for recusancy and the 1583 memorandum focused on punishing male recusants left wives on the fringes of legislation.

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91 x Julij, 1580, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/13, f. 77
92 Conyers Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), 288.
93 Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth, 289.
What followed Lord Burghley’s aggressive proposals in 1583 was an act in 1585 that declared it treason to shelter priests, raising the stakes for the punishment of disobedience from fines and imprisonment to capital punishment. The ‘Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests and Such Other like Disobedient Persons’ set the stage for the execution of 123 Catholics for priest-harboring from 1586 to 1603. However, of these numbers, only three were women. Elizabeth I is alleged to have “disliked the idea of punishing women for their religious beliefs.” This gender bias was documented in a letter from Jesuit Henry Garnet following the execution of Margaret Ward, a woman who helped a priest escape prison. “[Ward’s] fate is said to have touched the Queen’s womanly and tender heart. And it was for that reason that recently she pardoned two other women who had borne themselves before the tribunal with singular courage.” If women were in charge of the private sphere as historians suggest, and if they were regularly in control of harboring priests within the home, it is significant that they accounted for only two percent of the executions. While the act did find women culpable for the act of harboring priests, the absence of women at Tyburn suggests that, in practice as well as in theory, men were the prime targets of religious conformity.

The next decade saw heightened anxieties from local authorities over the threat of Catholic wives to conformity, due to their proximity to their husbands and their consistent

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94 Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 87.
95 Margaret Clitherow was executed at York on March 26, 1586 for refusing to plead after her arrest for priest harboring. Margaret Ward was executed at Tyburn for helping a priest escape on 30 August, 1588. Anne Line was executed at Tyburn for harboring priests on February 27, 1601. McGrath and Rowe, “The Elizabethan Priests,” 209-34.
96 According to Newman, “The Role of Women in Yorkshire Recusancy,” 12. There is a further example of Elizabeth I showing clemency to Lady Anne Stourton for her recusancy, as long as she did not engage in treasonous actions. See [Meeting] 6 July, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/26 f. 279. This hesitance to punish women will be discussed further in chapter 3.
presence in recusant rolls. Letters from Justices of the Peace concerning what to do with Catholic wives reveals that while wives were not the initial target of legislation, they were a problematic byproduct of the legislative attempt to control the male populace. It was only due to their perceived ability to sway their husbands that women became a prime target for the anti-Catholic penal laws. Although men had previously been held accountable for their wives’ disobedience, slowly the fault for a woman’s conscience began to be laid at her own feet. This led to jurisdictional issues over Catholic wives coupled with a real fear of the impact Catholic wives could have on their husbands’ religious conformity. In a letter to the Privy Council written in February 1588, Francis Cromwell, the Sheriff of Cambridge and Huntingdon, asked for directions on what to do with recusant wives, as he “durst not presume to apprehend [them] without further direction.” In the same year, the Earl of Kent wrote to the Council asking how he should proceed against women who were married to conformable husbands. In addition, William Cave, the sheriff of Leicestershire, wrote to the council, also in 1588, asking for instructions on how to proceed against the women and youths who were indicted for recusancy. All three of these letters show that the confusion over what to do with the Catholic wives of England crossed county lines and required the intervention of higher authorities. The Earl of Kent’s 1588 letter to the Privy Council expressed that the chief reason for the fear of wives was that “…husbands being so affected may very easily be induced and procured to give

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99 Francis Cromwell, Sheriff of Cambridge and Huntingdon, to the Council, 8 February 1588, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/208 f. 75.
100 Earl of Kent to the Council, 22 January 1588, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/208 f.22.
101 William Cave, sheriff, and other Commissioners of Leicestershire to the Council (12 February 1588), at the National Archives, London, SP 12/208 f. 91.
aide or intelligence unto the enemy.”

The threat posed by wives, that is, was due in large part to their ability to influence their husbands, which in turn was a serious threat to the realm.

In 1590, an article issued to the commissioners in various counties asked that the clerks of peace or assize inquire secretly after the names of receivers of priests and individuals who refused to attend church, whether male or female. Those suspected would be examined under oath. In addition, the commissioners were required to select loyal subjects to report on their recusant neighbors in the county. This increased desire on the part of the Queen and Lord Burghley to crack down on both male and female recusants in the early 1590s was likely a reaction to continued Catholic resistance and the inability for local counties to keep recusants in check. In 1592, a letter from the Privy Council notes that the Queen was "disturbed by the notable backwardness and defection in religion" in the midst of her constant leniency. In 1590, Lord Burghley turned his attention directly towards disobedient recusant wives in reaction to the previous confusion over how to enforce recusancy laws. He argued that Catholic wives should be indicted and condemned for their recusancy individually, attempting to correct the apparent error of previous laws that only applied to men. In a letter attributed to Lord Burghley, written in 1590, the chief advisor questioned what to do with the “inferior sort”. He stated, “And because there are also diverse of the inferior sort that are assessed at no fines or penalties for their recusancy who are likewise as evil affected in religion as the rest,” these individuals should also be accounted for. In 1592, Richard Topcliffe’s plea to Lord Burghley to recognize the dangers of women, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, asked that the

102 Earl of Kent to the Council, 22 January 1588, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/208 f.22.
103 Articles annexed to the Commission for recusants, 18? October 1591, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/240, f. 71a.
104 Letter from the Privy Council, 19 August 1592, at the Surry History Centre, Woking, 6729/10/86.
105 Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth, 468.
106 See Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth, 469.
“Lordship do take care of the inward infection of the state here at home in our realm.” Queen Elizabeth I used this same allusion to the Catholic faith as an “infection” in a proclamation in October of 1591. In this instance, the blame of patient zero for this infection was levied against the Jesuit priests in the realm, who could infect both men and women. Topcliffe wrote:

A remedy must be provided against the designs of the Jesuits and traitors, who, on pretense of sanctity, draw men and women by conscience into treasons, and are so secretly entertained that, without severe punishment, they would remain, as a concealed infection, in the entrails of the kingdom.

Protestant authorities would begin to make a connection between Jesuits and women, in particular, at the turn of the seventeenth century, as will be discussed in the next chapter. A letter from the Privy Council proves that by 1592, the prominent priest hunter Richard Topcliffe, Lord Burghley, the Privy Council, and the Queen officially recognized the threat of Catholic women, and in particular, wives. The letter states:

We have received your letter of the second of this present and do thereby perceive the diversity of your opinions whether married women, wives to persons that do not incur the danger of the laws for not coming to the church, may for their Recusancy be committed to prison and so severed from their husbands, and whether their husbands are by the law punishable by any pecuniary pain for that offence of their wives. These are to signify unto you that her Majesty upon good consideration had of these questions by you and others in that behalf moved, intended at the beginning of the next Term upon the assembly of the Judges to take their opinions and to give order in the matter according to the laws and necessity of the time.

A similar letter dated September 1592 from the council addressed to the Commissioners for Recusants in the county of Northampton acknowledged that there was confusion over what to do with wives who refused to go to church while their husbands conformed. However, in this letter,

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108 Proclamation by the Queen for remedy of the treasons which, under pretext of religion, have been plotted by seminaries and Jesuits, 18 October 1591, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/240 f. 68.
the Privy Council suggested to “commit some five or six of the best of them, so to remain until by their husbands they may be persuaded or wrought to conformity.” By making an example of a few Catholic wives, the council hoped that this would entice the men of the realm to control and instill conformity within their own household.

By 1593, the 13-year culmination of anxiety towards Catholic wives resulted in “The Act against Recusants”. The act specifically stated, “All and every woman married, or hereafter to be married, shall be bound by all and every article, branch, and matter contained in this statute.”

Finally, there was clarity on the legal liability of Catholic wives. Around the same time, “An Act for the reducing of disloyal subjects to their due obedience” declared that recusant wives were to lose their dowers, again signaling changes in legislation in reaction to the threat of recusant wives. These acts maintained that a Catholic woman free to roam in her community could corrupt her children and family. It called for the “restraint of such and principal gentlewomen, wives, widows, and others as have been found to be obstinate recusants…their children and families by their example have been corrupted in religion….such gentlewomen as your Lordship shall find to continue in their obstinacy, to the end they may be kept from further infecting of others.”

The language used within the order conjures images of a plague or sickness that could spread through careless contact. Women, and not just wives, could ‘infect’ and ‘corrupt’ through

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110 [Meeting] At the Court of Sherborne, 14 September, 1592, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/20 f. 34.
111 A similar letter was sent in September 1592 from Sir Robert Cecil and the court at Down Ampney to the Earl of Derby stating that “Her [Elizabeth I] pleasure is that you go forward as you have proposed…with the women as with the rest.” The council ordered that female recusants be arrested, along with the other recusants of the county. [Meeting] at the Court of Downamney [Down Ampney] (2 September, 1592), at the National Archives, London, PC 2/20 f. 12.
114 Order for the restraint of obstinate female recusants, who have corrupted their families in religion, in Kent, Surrey, and elsewhere, 7 January 1592/3, at Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 2008, f. 40.
their Catholic beliefs, and sway both their husbands and their children towards rejecting the Protestant faith. The language used here does not emphasize the role of women as passive participants or tools for the Jesuit priests. Instead, these are words of agency that promoted fear about the possible influence women held over their family members. Furthermore, in 1593, the ‘Act against Popish Recusants’ declared that all adult recusants had to be confined within five miles of their houses.\textsuperscript{115} Burghley’s action against the recusants and the Queen’s expressed displeasure at the religious state of the realm suggests a real fear of further Catholic uprisings and a continued reactionary legislative agenda to protect the realm.\textsuperscript{116}

Due to the perceived influence that women – particularly wives – held in their families, the real concern remained over the conformity of men and the possible danger a wife could pose to that conformity – not the threat of a Catholic woman herself. This is illustrated in a 1593 letter to the Earl of Huntington and the Archbishop of York from the council on behalf of a group of men asking for the release of their wives who were prisoners in various places within the county of York. The letter states:

Their husbands being all (as we are credibly informed) conformable in religion and very desirous to have them return home unto them, upon confidence they shall be able…to work and induce them by good persuasions and instructions in some convenient time to yield themselves in conformity. Upon hope whereof we have thought good to allow of the enlargement of the gentlewomen, and do pray and require your Lordships upon the receipt hereof to give present order for their relief and return to the dwelling houses and company of their husbands.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115} It is ironic that the legislative attempt to limit the influence of Catholics was to keep them in the very place they were most influential – their houses. See Rowlands, “Recusant Women”, 154 and Neal, \textit{Queen Elizabeth and Her Parliaments}.

\textsuperscript{116} Read, \textit{Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth}, 468.

\textsuperscript{117} [Meeting] xix die Junie (sic), 1593, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/20 f. 424. An additional letter that points to the notion that husbands were still meant to control their household is a letter from the council, also written in 1593, to the authorities in Lincoln. The contents combine the problem of recusant wives with the problem of Catholic servants. This seems to suggest that recusancy in wives and servants alike pointed to a problem with the entire household. See CR 1998/Box 86/52 in the Warwickshire County Record Office, Warwick.
In this instance, authorities held married women accountable for their recusancy, signaling that their *femme couverte* no longer protected their actions. Yet, authorities released them into the care of their husbands, who were charged with managing the conformity of their wives. The council was convinced that female nonconformity would not interfere with male competence. In 1597, Matthew Ebor, the archbishop of York, wrote a letter to Lord Burghley pleading the case of a Mr. Clopton, whose wife had become a recusant. He writes, “I prove he hath endeavored and labored accordingly, but as yet, cannot reclaim her,” and that due to his good disposition he should continue in his office, whatever that might have been.\(^{118}\) While married women were now culpable for their actions, they still oftentimes avoided punishment by being released into the care of their husbands, if the husband could prove he could continue in his conformity.

Around the turn of the century, culpability for actions turned into punishment for actions for married women, not only in terms of imprisonment, but also in the question of the payment of recusancy fines. A list of recusants within the dioceses in England and Wales records around 3,000 recusants in 1596, – 1,644 of which were women listed individually.\(^{119}\) In a memorandum found within the state papers, dated July 1601, the unknown author argues that a husband should not be responsible to pay for his wife’s recusancy. A husband should not be punishable for what was the sole action of his wife and he should not be “punished for omitting to exercise a government over her mind.”\(^{120}\) Only decades earlier, husbands were accountable to pay for their wives’ recusancy, yet the argument now stated that the man should not be punishable for what was the sole act of his wife, particularly if he was not an accessory to the act. It would be an

\(^{118}\) *The Abp. of York, to Lord Burghley: in favour of Mr. Clopton, whose wife was unhappily become a Recusant*, December 22, 1597, at the British Library, London, Lansdowne MS 84, f.83.

\(^{119}\) *Letters and papers mainly on ecclesiastical affairs*, 1596, at Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 3470 ff. 185-6.

\(^{120}\) *Reasons why a man should not pay for his wife’s recusancy*, July 1601, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/281 f. 76. Although the calendar does state the memorandum is in Tresham’s hand.
“absurdity” and an “injustice” for a man to be punished for omitting to exercise a government over his wife’s mind.\textsuperscript{121}

A renewed surge of anti-Catholic measures and an even more direct management of Catholic women followed the aftermath of the foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605, which revealed James I’s intended relationship with Catholics as the realm’s new monarch. Almost immediately following the plot, the 1605 “Act for the better discovery of Popish Recusants” stated that all who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance, including wives, widows and single women, could be liable to imprisonment and forfeiture of goods.\textsuperscript{122} An examination of the quarter session records and recusant rolls from various counties in England suggests why James I and his council continued to pay attention to recusant women. In Northumberland, a list of recusants from 1606 notes 261 women and 130 men and in Durham and the quarter sessions records from April 19, 1615 lists 214 women and 104 men.\textsuperscript{123} Each of these examples reveals that more than half of the indicted recusants were women.\textsuperscript{124} In 1610, the “Act for the Administration of the

\textsuperscript{121} Reasons why a man should not pay for his wife’s recusancy, July 1601, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/281 f. 76. It appears that the problem with recusant wives never fully resolved itself. Even in 1642, a warrant was released for married women in a letter to the Bishop of Winton. The letter notes that there were “diverse persons…many of their wives notwithstanding do not only continue obstinate by refusing to come to church…but also do use at their ordinary meetings among themselves very unreverend speeches of the religion now established in this realm.”

\textsuperscript{122} Rowlands, “Recusant Women”, 155.

\textsuperscript{123} For the Northumberland records, see: List of recusants in co. Durham (incl. N. Nothumberland) ‘extracted from an original Roman Catholic Recusant Roll formerly in the Clerk of the Peace Office, Durham, but now destroyed. (Typescript taken from the copy preserved at St. Cuthbert’s Durham), May – September 1606, at the Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn, NRO 1954/71. For the Durham Quarter Session Records, see Durham Record. M. 824. Transcribed from a copy printed by Marwood for Sir Cuthbert Sharp, at the Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn, NRO 1954/5. The original is among the Greenwell Deeds in Newcastle Central Library, see “Arch. Ael”. 4\textsuperscript{b} series, vol. III, 356, pp. 1-14.

\textsuperscript{124} Unfortunately, quarter session records from the sixteenth century are difficult to find within local record offices. Many county archives and record offices have quarter session records from the seventeenth century onwards; however, most records from the sixteenth century have not survived. Although, multiple volumes of the Catholic Record Society publications, published in 1916, include recusant rolls transcribed from documents within the National Archives. These lists include recusants from counties throughout England. See Volume 18 for Recusant Roll No. 1 (1592-93); Volume 53 for a Book of Recusants (1582-95); Volume 57 for Recusant Roll No. 2 (1593-94); Volume 61 for Recusant Rolls No. 3 (1594-95) and No. 4 (1595-96); and Volume 71 for Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls (1581-92). Catholic Record Society (London: Strowger and Son, 1916).
Oath of Allegiance and the Reformation of Married Women Recusants” required that married recusant women swear the oath, legally uncovering the previous coverture of their husbands. A list of recusants who took the oath in various counties throughout England, dated July 18, 1612 and endorsed by Sir Julius Caesar, Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer and the man responsible for rounding up recusants, does in fact include names of men and women, although men are still the majority.\footnote{Oathe of allegiance, 18 Julij 1612, at the British Library, London, Lansdowne MS 153, f.51.} Instructions from James I to Robert More, a member of Parliament, also written in July 1612 clearly states that the commission was to “pursue and prosecute all and everie due course of law against all weomen recusants, within the counties or that have or shall have any dwelling or abroad, within the said counties, wheresoever they shall remove or remayne.”\footnote{Instructions for drawing a booke of a perfect and ample commissiion for His Highnes servaunte Robert More, July 12, 1612, at the British Library, London, Lansdowne MS 153 f. 77.}

Thus, according to correspondence, quarter session records, and acts of Parliament from the early seventeenth century, the reign of James I began with a clear direction on what to do with Catholic wives, both in policy and in practice. In 1616, James I further expounded on his opinion of recusants:

> As for Recusants, let them bee all duely presented without exception: for in times past there hath beene too great a connivence, and forbearing of them, especially of great mens wives, and their kinne and followers. None ought to be spared from being brought under the danger of Law, and then it is my part to use mercie, as I thinke convenient. To winke at faults, and not to suffer them to bee discovered, is no Honour, nor Mercy in a King, neither is he ever thanked for it; It onely argues his dulnesse: But to forgive faults after they are confessed, or tried, is Mercie. I confesse I am loath to hang a Priest onely for Religion sake, and saying Masse; but if he refuse the Oath of Alleagiance (which, let the Pope and all the deuils in Hell say what they will) yet (as you finde by my booke and by dierers others, is meerely Civill) those that so refuse the Oath, and are Polypragmaticke Recusants; I leavem them to the Law; it is no persecution, but good Justice.\footnote{James I, The workes of the most high and mightie prince, James by the grace of God, King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c. Published by James, Bishop of Winton, and deane of his Maiesties Chappel Royall (1616), Early English Books Online, Web, 19 November 2014, pp. 544-545.}
After escaping a potentially deadly fifth of November, James’ agenda over the next decade was to ensure political allegiance from Catholics, not necessarily religious conformity. In order to ensure conformity, the question of what to do with Catholic wives was officially answered. However, despite this clear agenda, the reign of James I continued in much the same vein as Elizabeth when it came to the enforcement of such legislation. Marie Rowlands argues that, “From 1620 onwards the incidence of prosecution for recusancy declined sharply…the state thus never solved the problem of dealing with married women recusants; instead it withdrew from an inconclusive engagement.”¹²⁸

In sum, when it came to the threat of Catholic women in post-Reformation England, wives were the focus of anxiety amidst Protestant authorities and members of the Privy Council under Elizabeth I and the early years of James I for two reasons. First, they presented a jurisdictional problem. In many counties, sheriffs were unsure of what to do with Catholic women who were married to conforming husbands. Confusion or evasion surrounding the issue of Catholic wives was amplified by the second reason Catholic wives instilled fear – their proximity to their husbands. Catholic wives could infect or sway the conformity of their husbands, children, and household (including servants) and thereby inflict danger on the conformity of the realm. However, neither of these fears was in response to the actual religious consciences of the women as individuals. They were instead focused on the impact they could potentially have on the conforming elite males of the realm – the real target of legislation. Just as the legislative agenda of Elizabeth and her Privy Council focused on converting the Catholic men of England, the reactions and pressures felt by those who locally enforced that legislation also reveal the same gendered agenda – to conform men and control wayward wives.

¹²⁸ Rowlands, “Recusant Women”, 156.
Due to this strategic legislative focus on married women and recusant men, both legislation and correspondence from the enforcers of that legislation largely ignored the threat posed by single women or widows. This is because widows had a *femme sole* status in the eyes of the law, did not benefit from the protection of a husband, and had therefore been financially and legally responsible their own actions since the beginning of the Elizabethan penal laws.¹²⁹ Within this gendered strategy of the English Reformation, legislation underestimated the threat of Catholic widows due to their social isolation and a lack of proximity to male authority. This focus on wives and disregard towards widows in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century would influence histories written about the English Catholic community centuries later.

**The Historiographical Problem of Catholic Wives**

The focus of Elizabethan officials on the control of Catholic men, as revealed in correspondence, state papers, and letters of the Privy Council, contributed toward decades of histories on the post-Reformation Catholic community that focused on the role of the male gentry and laity, along with the Jesuits and seminary priests in the Catholic cause. The realization that women had an important role to play is a late-twentieth century innovation. Most mentions of women in the 1960s and 1970s generally characterized them as “tools for assisting men.”¹³⁰ As social historians and historians of women and gender began to uncover the active

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role of women as priest harborers and maintainers of Catholic households, one common theme arose: a focus on the Catholic wife. As shown in the previous section, the source base for recusancy – recusant rolls, correspondence, state papers, quarter session records – highlight the heightened anxiety of Protestant authorities towards Catholic wives. Since the anxiety of Protestant authorities focused on conforming men, and thereby only noticed the threat of Catholic wives in perverting the religious consciences of their husbands, it is unsurprising that historians have focused on the same theme when it comes to understanding the role of women in the Catholic community. Yet, as will be shown, there is a disconnect between this focus and the individual examples of the actual women most active in the Catholic community.

Sister Joseph Damien Hanlon acknowledged the role of women in the post-Reformation Catholic community in 1965. Although her argument bordered on the hagiographic, she argued that the courage of women within the Catholic laity aided in the continuance of the faith. She maintained that Catholic “women of the households” had a “tough confidence, and matter-of-fact determination.” Hanlon credits women’s strong resolve, courage, and control of the household as the primary factors in their ability to preserve the faith. What is more, she acknowledged the role of widows and their use of financial resources towards this end. In fact, much of the evidence used in Hanlon’s analysis comes from the biographies of Catholic widows written by their confessors. The biographies of Dorothy Lawson, Lady Magdalen Montague, Anne Howard, Elizabeth Cary, and Margaret Clitherow, each written in the seventeenth century, feature prominently in most studies of Catholic women in post-Reformation

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131 Hanlon, “These Be But Women,” 372.
133 Hanlon, “These Be But Women,” 372.
England. Of these five, four were widows for the majority of their subversive actions. Of the biographies of widows, Dorothy Lawson, Lady Magdalen Montague, Anne Howard, and Elizabeth Cary, the confessor focused on their years of widowhood instead of married life—a female cycle of life that provided more resources and opportunities to dedicate to God. Yet, in the last forty years, historians have largely ignored the role of widows specifically. Instead, by focusing on official documents and not the individual actions of specific women as recorded in biographies and correspondence, the role of wives became the topic of general analysis.

In 1975, John Bossy maintained that women played an important part in the early history of the English Catholic community. Bossy argued, “I think the evidence entitles us to conclude that, to a considerable degree, the Catholic community owed its existence to gentlewomen’s dissatisfaction at the Reformation settlement of religion, and that they played an abnormally important part in its early history.” The reason for the increased attention given to the role of women in the practice of the Catholic religion is the argument that this faith was delineated to the household in the late-sixteenth century, due to increased legislation against Catholic practice. Responsibility for the maintenance and practice of Catholic rites fell into the feminine sphere where women could and did take the initiative to participate actively in the family’s religious

135 Only six of the twenty-one chapters in Anne Howard’s biography discuss her role as a wife. Three of the nine chapters of Dorothy Lawson’s biography focus on her life as a married woman, while five of the sixteen chapters in Lady Magdalen Montague’s biography do the same. Forty-nine pages of 125 in Elizabeth Cary’s biography discuss her married life. The majority of each biography focuses on the actions of each woman as a widow over those as a wife.
136 Bossy, The English Catholic Community, 158.
137 Bossy, The English Catholic Community, 158.
Bossy recognizes the key role of women in English Catholicism; however, his acknowledgment of the role of widows is sparse. In 1985, Marie Rowlands argued that the Catholic wife was the one who posed a problem towards religions conformity for Protestant authorities, an echo of the correspondence and legislation discussed previously in this chapter. Because the maintenance of Catholicism fell into the private sphere, Rowlands argues much like Bossy that women had a particularly important role to play within the Catholic household. However, her focus remained on the role of wives. While she acknowledges, “Widows with their own houses and incomes were especially well placed to receive priests,” Rowlands offers no further analysis of widowhood as a factor in female agency. Yet, of the ten individuals Rowlands examines as active priest-harborers, half are widows, one is unmarried, three have an unknown marital status, and only one is married. The primacy placed on the role of wives in her article is incongruent with the number of widows present in her research. Furthermore, Rowlands equated the role of “women” with the role of “wives” when she examined the memorandum proposed by Richard Topcliffe, the same memorandum quoted and discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Rowlands states, “Richard Topcliffe, the vigorous prosecutor of papists, also submitted a memorandum urging strong measures against recusant wives.” While Rowlands maintains that Topcliffe urged for measures against wives, the document penned by Topcliffe himself actually states that he is

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139 Bossy mentions Dorothy Lawson in his analysis, but only in reference to her work before the death of her husband. After her husband’s death, Dorothy built a house in Newcastle as a meeting place for Jesuits, yet this is not a part of Bossy’s analysis. Furthermore, he names two other widows but comments that he will leave them aside, pp.156-157.
140 Rowlands, “Recusant Women”, 150.
urging for measures against “ladies, gentlewomen, as well married as widows.” While Topcliffe distinguishes marital status within his letter, Rowlands combines all women into the category of “wives”.

Social histories have also highlighted the unique role of Catholic widows in the household, without a clear discussion of marital status. Christopher Haigh’s work on the importance of the parish clergy to late-Elizabethan Catholicism recognizes the importance of five Catholic families, of which widows led four. Similarly, of the fourteen influential female priest-harborers in Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe’s 1989 study on the Catholic laity, six are widows, four are married women, and four have an unknown marital status. While widows feature prominently in these studies, neither Rowlands, Haigh, nor McGrath and Joy acknowledge or discuss widowhood or the role of widows specifically.

By the end of the 1980s, histories shifted from identifying the prominent role of women in the Catholic community and instead began to question why their presence was so substantial. In a sense, the heroic narratives of Sister Joseph Damian Hanlon shifted to a more analytical gender history. In 1989, Christine Newman examined the presence of female recusants in quarter session and recusant records, and argued much like Bossy, that it was due to their religious belief coupled with the ease with which the maintenance of that belief was sequestered to the household – a distinctly feminine sphere. Like previous histories, Newman’s work focused on

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144 Christopher Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,” in The English Reformation Revised, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 65. The five families include the Babthorpes of Osgodby (led by Grace Babthorpe, widow); the Montagues at Battle (led by Lady Magdalen Montague after the death of Lord Montague); the Wiseman’s at Braddocks (led by Jane Wiseman, widow), the household of Dorothy Lawson near Newcastle, widow; and the partnership of John Mush and Margaret Clitherow, who was a married woman at the time of her death.
145 McGrath and Rowe, “The Elizabethan Priests,” 209-34.
the role of the wife in this feminine sphere, clearly delineating an opportunity inherent in gender. She argued that due to a wife’s coverture by her husband, she was free to act on her religious conscience as a sort of “loophole” to religious conformity provided by marriage.\textsuperscript{146} This loophole was created by the conforming husband who outwardly maintained a façade of compliance, while the wife was free to do as she pleased.\textsuperscript{147} Newman, much like Rowlands a few years earlier, dismissed the role of widows and unmarried women because they could be easily punished for their recusancy, and thereby lacked male protection.\textsuperscript{148} Yet within Newman’s article, of the five women that govern her analysis, only one was married for the bulk of her active resistance to Protestant authorities – Margaret Clitherow.\textsuperscript{149} Three of the five were widows and one was never married. As has been characteristic in the historiography of women’s role in Catholic resistance, the term “woman” has become synonymous with “wife”, even though much of the evidence suggests the active role of the \textit{femme sole}. Since a widow was technically liable to pay for her recusancy, historians have overlooked widowhood as a theme of analysis in the history of the Catholic community. However, this omission ignores the numerous examples of widows who authorities either pardoned or wholly ignored. As has been the subject of previous studies, the written laws of the sixteenth and seventeenth century often did not correspond with

\textsuperscript{146} Newman, “The Role of Women,” 11.
\textsuperscript{147} An example of this “loophole” can be found in a list of names of recusants within the county of Lancaster in 1584. The document reads that the men listed “go to the church, and keep Mass at home for their wives.” Two men are listed with confidence, while eight additional names are listed as “suspected”. See \textit{Names of the recusants listed within the county of Lancaster}, 1584, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/175 f. 32.
\textsuperscript{148} Marie Rowlands argued in her 1985 article, “Spinsters of competent age and widows were held responsible for their own actions and could be indicted, fined and if necessary imprisoned. The problem lay in obtaining the conformity of married women.” Rowlands, “Recusant Women,” 150. Both Newman and Rowlands disregarded the role of widows because they could be fined for their noncompliance.
\textsuperscript{149} Dorothy Lawson, Lady Babthorpe, Lady Katherine Scrope, (widows), Mary Ward (never married), Margaret Clitherow (wife).
the actual enforcement of those laws.\textsuperscript{150} For example, in the instance of the council writing for the release of the recusant wives of five Yorkshire men in 1593, as previously discussed, they also wrote to release the widow Catherine Radcliffe. The letter states:

For as much as she doth in that point answer the penalty of the law, and being at liberty is liable and subject to all other penalties and restraints of the late statues and chiefly for her residence and the limitation of the place about the same, according to the last statue, we have been induced at the humble suit of her friends to allow of her enlargement in like sort with the rest, and do therefore pray your Lordships she also may be set at liberty and suffered to repair and reside at her own house in the county of York.\textsuperscript{151}

Despite the fact that the widow Catherine Radcliffe was liable to the penalty of the law, the Privy Council released her at the bequest of her friends, just as they released the wives into the care of their husbands. In spite of their liability, the law did not hinder the actions of numerous Catholic widows in post-Reformation England, as will be the subject of the remaining chapters. In each of Rowlands, Haigh, McGrath and Rowe, and Newman’s studies, widows have outnumbered married women, although each disregards the role of widows in general due to their legal liability. Yet widows’ liability for their actions did not deter their persistent presence in the Catholic cause.

Gender histories written at the turn of the twenty-first century continued the pattern of equating the role of women in Catholic preservation with wives. In 1999, Arthur Marotti wrote, “The recusant Catholic woman was an important character in the religious and cultural drama of early modern England for a number of reasons. First, married either to a conforming church papist or to a Protestant spouse, she was a figure of resistance to state authority, a sign of

\textsuperscript{150} For example, see Muriel McClendon’s \textit{The Quiet Reformation: Magistrates and the Emergence of Protestantism in Tudor Norwich} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). In the study, McClendon argues that the city experienced an authentic yet quiet Reformation unique to post-Reformation England because of the way magistrates handled religious divisions. In this instance, the magistrates opted for peaceful and local solutions. By researching a single town, McClendon was able to show that local circumstances dictated the enforcement of legislation.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{[Meeting] xix die Junie (sic)}, 1593, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/20 f. 424.
persistence of the ‘old religion’ within the new Protestant nation.”152 While Marotti’s statement points to a focus on women who were married – to papists or Protestants – of the nine women examined in his study, five were widows, three never married, and only one was married.153 In 2001, Sarah Bastow’s analysis of Dorothy Lawson examines her actions as a wife, although her analysis stops there.154 Lawson’s more famous actions as a widow are missing from Bastow’s analysis, including her construction of a house in Newcastle for the sole use of Jesuit priests.155 Bastow argues that women could be individual threats in their own right, not simply assistants to the actions of men. However, widows are marginalized as a threat because “once widowed, these women became liable to bear the costs of their own actions.”156 Bastow also equates the vital and active role of women with that of wives when she states, “The presence of Catholic priests and tutors in houses headed by a conformist male with a recusant wife indicate that the role of women was vital.”157 In 2007, Emma Watson also wrote “wives” as synonymous with the role of “women” as she states, “As Catholicism became more and more a household religion the importance of women in maintaining the old faith steadily increased, albeit with the collusion of their husbands.”158 Here, a husband’s presence is assumed.

In 2009, Marie Rowlands’ refreshed examination of her 1985 article acknowledges that widows were more apt to aid the Catholic cause due to their independence and control over

153 The five widows were Anne Line, Jane Wiseman, Anne Howard, Lady Magdalen Montague, and Elizabeth Cary. Single women Gertrude More, Mary Ward, and Anne Vaux are also part of the analysis, along with the one married woman, Margaret Clitherow.
154 Bastow, “Worth Nothing, but very Wilful,” 601.
156 Bastow, “Worth Nothing but very Wilful,” 595.
157 Bastow, “Worth Nothing but very Wilful,” 599.
158 Watson, “Disciplined Disobedience?” 301.
finances. Although, she maintains that there is difficulty in interpreting the predominance of widows and the significance of the evidence. She states, “So much depends on the purpose of particular listings; more needs to be done to relate these indications to local circumstances and to national demographics.”  

Recent work has examined how women offered unique opportunities that were unavailable to male harborers, opening the door to a potential avenue of analysis for how widowhood, in particular, could influence the act of harboring priests. Laurence Lux-Sterritt argued in 2011 that wealthy women could offer priests their resources, a different level of safety for harboring due to their ambiguous relationship with penal laws, and use gendered prejudices to their advantage. While Lux-Sterrit’s general focus is on housewives, as she states, “English missionaries formed frequent alliances with married women and mothers” and “priests would gain undeniable advantages from alliances with housewives,” of the eight individual women highlighted in the study, six are widows, one is married, and one remained unmarried.

The hagiographic narratives of women in the 1960s preceded histories in the 1980s and 1990s that argued for female agency in the English Catholic community. Gender history emerged in the 1980s, calling for a new analysis of the relationship between men and women. Yet this analysis went beyond a differentiation of the sexes, instead looking at the constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity as seen through the relationships between men and women. Works from Christine Newman, Arthur Marotti, and Laurence Lux-Sterritt departed from a “history of women” to examine instead the ways sexual difference influenced the perception, actions, and interactions of women and men in the post-Reformation Catholic community. Yet amidst this historiographical transition from hagiography to gender history, the role of wives has remained

159 Rowlands, “Harbourers and Housekeepers,” 206.
pivotal in each analysis, despite the predominant presence of widows as individual examples of female agency. Thus, the rhetoric of the source base for studies of recusancy has guided the focus of historians, thereby excluding a trend that deserves attention. Since the official strategy of the crown was to control men and their wayward wives, married women have featured prominently in studies of female agency. The following chapters will work to fill this void in the historiography of the Catholic community by utilizing biographies and correspondence in conjunction with state papers to examine how widowhood provided unique opportunities for the Catholic cause, thus revealing why widows have been frequently present, albeit not discussed.

Conclusion

In sum, the legislation of the English Reformation focused on creating a society of conforming men. Anxiety about controlling wayward Catholic wives was only an expression of this concern with male conformity, not an expression of women’s recusancy itself. This focus on male conformity left widows on the periphery of the legislative strategy since widows were independent from male authority and therefore generally isolated in society. Of course, there are examples of all women – widows, married, single – who had to answer to the law. It is not the point of this chapter to argue that widows were invisible or that they were not culpable. In fact, they were, more so than their married counterparts. Since widows had a *femme sole* status, they lost the protection of their husband for their actions. Yet this assumption of culpability and prosecution under the law, on the part of local enforcement, chief advisors, the Privy Council, reigning monarchs, and later, historians, disregards the fact that enforcement of laws did not always follow the letter of the law. The result is that widows were essentially overlooked in both the legislative strategy of Elizabeth and her council, and in written histories on the Catholic community. The following chapters of this dissertation will show that widows were in fact active.
in their largely unnoticed role due to their social independence, economic security, and legal ambiguity. Widows had independence and resources that were unavailable to married women who were legally and socially under the authority of their husbands. Tim Stretton argues, “Women who outlived their husbands not only emerged from coverture and recovered their legal capacity, they tended to have more experience, greater self-confidence and greater resources.”

Although Stretton is considering the opportunities afforded to widows in regards to litigation, his analysis is applicable to widows bent on religious subversion. The economic independence and ability to own property that accompanied widowhood was vital to a Catholic cause forced into the privacy and secrecy of the household by penal laws.

In an effort to direct studies of religious change and resistance in England to include marital status as a theme of analysis, the following chapters underscore the opportunities afforded to some widows that were contingent on their gender and marital status, and unavailable to wives in early modern England – independence in society, economic security, and cultural stereotypes of vulnerability. By dissecting the experiences of individual women within their local surroundings, the following chapters will begin the process of disentangling the role of “women” within the Catholic community by offering an analysis of how marital status is essential to understanding the gendered nature of religious change and resistance.

The next chapter will discuss how cultural perceptions and stereotypes of widowhood, together with the social and economic autonomy afforded to widows, created unique opportunities for Catholic widows that were unavailable to women with a \textit{femme couverte} status. Merry Wiesner-Hanks has challenged historians to think towards a gendered interpretation of the

Reformation to include a comparison across class, denominational, and regional lines. I propose that we also look across marital lines, because as the famed priest-hunter Richard Topcliffe stated, there are “gentlewomen, as well married as widows” that should not be overlooked.  

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CHAPTER TWO:

POWER IN VULNERABILITY: AGENCY IN THE CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORKS OF WIDOWHOOD

The death of Dorothy Lawson’s husband in 1614 left the matron with fifteen children, a family house in Heaton near Newcastle, and a transformed social position from a married woman to a solitary widow. With no plans to remarry, Lawson gained economic independence from the wealth she acquired following her husband’s death. With the newfound social and economic autonomy, Lawson’s household became a bastion of Catholic faith in early seventeenth-century Newcastle. Before her widowhood, Lawson maintained a chaplain in her house, albeit with the reluctance of her in-laws and husband. After the death of her husband, she built her own home in Newcastle, which acted as a Catholic hub in her neighborhood. She employed Catholic servants, harbored priests, and held Catholic services in her house, converting both family members and neighbors back to the Catholic faith. As evidenced by her actions before and after the death of her husband, widowhood provided opportunities for clandestine practices previously unavailable to her as a married woman. The domestic and financial independence granted by widowhood, in combination with her dedication to the Catholic cause, created a vital outpost for Jesuit priests.

Dorothy Lawson was not the only widow to use her situation to protect and promote the early modern English Catholic community. The final three chapters of this dissertation are dedicated to examining more than sixty widows who utilized specific opportunities, contingent on their marital status, to harbor priests, host clandestine Mass, and patronize religious institutions abroad, in order to reveal a connection between marital status, gender, and religious

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164 Sister Joseph Damien Hanlon C.S.J., “These Be But Women,” in From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation, ed. Charles H. Carter (New York: Random House, 1965), 372. Hanlon argues that it was leniency in the enforcement of laws that allowed for Dorothy Lawson’s recusant actions.
survival. The first two chapters provide contextual analysis for the legal, social, cultural, and economic structures within which these widows lived and worked. The first chapter set the legal groundwork, while this chapter will examine the cultural, economic, and social frameworks of early modern English widowhood to show how a \textit{femme sole} status set widows apart from other Catholics, and indeed other women, in post-Reformation England. I argue that the perceived cultural stereotypes surrounding widowhood, combined with the economic and social independence provided by the death of a woman’s husband, produced unique opportunities for widows to harbor priests, which shaped the strategy of the Catholic mission starting in the 1580s. A widow had both resources and opportunities available to her that were unavailable to other Catholics, an advantage recognized by both Jesuit priests and Protestant authorities.

The previous chapter argued that Elizabethan legislation focused on controlling the conforming male and wayward wife, while widows were generally ignored in both history and historiography due to both their place in society and the legislative strategy of the state. This chapter will continue this focus on a widow’s ambiguity in society. To unpack the variant structures inherent in entering into widowhood, and their role in widows’ ability to aid the Catholic mission, the chapter is organized into three sections. The first provides a sketch of three divergent cultural stereotypes of widowhood found in male-authored early modern English texts: 1) vulnerable and powerless, 2) chaste and pious, and 3) lusty. A variety of early modern genres featured widows, from biblical commentaries and sermons, to conduct books, drama, comedies, and ballads. Commentaries and sermons most frequently depicted widows as vulnerable and in need of care. Prescriptive literature called for widows to be chaste, pious, and solitary, while playwrights frequently employed comedic representations of widows as lusty and dangerous women. This section examines a variety of extant early modern English texts and modern
interpretations of all three stereotypes to illustrate how competing perceptions created a contradictory, imagined figure, which influenced real assumptions about widows.

The second section examines the economic and social reality of widowhood, in contrast to the cultural perceptions of widowhood described in the first. Due to property and inheritance law, the economic prospects of some widows, and the ability to abstain from remarriage, some widows had a great deal more autonomy in both time and resources than other women, which directly contradicts the prevailing perceptions of widows as vulnerable and weak women. This surprising autonomy in a patriarchal society potentially fueled the comedic sketches of widows as lusty and disorderly in an effort to control a demographic that was outside male authority. While not all widows enjoyed financial security, this analysis suggests that the acquisition of both property and goods following the death of a husband could provide a sense of security to some that was unique to women in early modern England.

The third section combines the cultural representations of widowhood in the first section with the social and economic autonomy of widows in the second to propose that Jesuit priests within the Catholic mission capitalized on the opportunities provided by these particular cultural, social, and economic frameworks. This section suggests a perceptible shift in strategy, beginning in the late 1580s, on the part of Jesuits John Gerard, Henry Garnet, Edward Oldcorne, William Weston, and Robert Southwell towards a frequent use of widows’ houses. The autonomy and resources inherent in widowhood were not only acknowledged by Jesuits, but also by Protestant authorities. This section reveals the extent to which Protestant clergy acknowledged the presence of priests in the circles of widows. Overall, evidence from the movements of Jesuit priests, the lives of individual widows, and the writings of Protestant authorities reveal a pattern previously
underestimated by historians that underscores opportunities for clandestine and subversive actions that were contingent on gender and marital status.

**Vulnerable, Pious, or Lusty? Cultural Perceptions and Possibilities of Widowhood**

Women in early modern English society were defined by their relationship to men, whether it be as a daughter, wife, mother, or sister. This gendered hierarchy represented the ideal of an ordered society, one that placed women as subordinate to men under the notion of *femme couvert* – literally a woman covered by the identity and authority of a male guardian. Widows or *femme soles* who operated without the coverture of a husband challenged this gendered hierarchy of society and thereby inspired anxiety in male authors, both in early modern England and on the continent. In the last two decades, studies began to examine textual and visual representations of early modern widowhood, although most focus on popular print culture surrounding the stage. Such histories of popular perceptions of widowhood divide the stereotypes of widowhood into two categories: first, the prescriptive expectation of a pious, chaste, and obedient widow and second, the lusty widow who preyed on young would-be husbands, had an insatiable sexual desire, and remarried despite the potential detriment to her children.

The first represents the ideal widow, as reflected in guidebooks and scripture. Early modern English authors depicted the ideal widow as a woman who exhibited self-control,

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166 While a majority of the works discussed in this chapter is from England, it is worth noting that these stereotypes of widowhood were present in early modern continental works as well. However, the agency that the stereotypes of vulnerability and piety provided widows in England were important in the unique religious and political situation of Catholic widows in Protestant England, since Catholics had to go underground and act clandestinely.
168 As discussed in the introduction to Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner’s *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 1999), 7.
chastity, and obedience to God in her solitude. Conversely, contemporary portrayals of the lusty widow in comedies and ballads depict a rich, independent, and worldly woman with an insatiable sexual appetite who preyed on young men.\textsuperscript{169} By prescribing how a widow should or should not act, male authors attempted to assert control over a female demographic that was uniquely socially and economically autonomous. While the dichotomous stereotypes of widows as both pious and dangerous individuals are the most prevalent in previous studies of widowhood, the terminology from extant English printed texts suggests a third, albeit obvious stereotype of widowhood – the vulnerable and weak woman in need of care. Through a combined qualitative and quantitative analysis, the following section examines all three stereotypes of widows in both early modern texts and modern studies to create a general synthesis of the variety of ways widows were perceived in early modern society by male authors. While these stereotypes are by nature not representative of all widows in early modern England, they are categories, created by early modern male authors, in order to define, through a variety of genres, the ways widows were supposed to act. By understanding the ways male authors described and prescribed the behavior and role of widows in society, the section creates a cultural framework through which to view the actions and interactions of the individual widows in the following chapters. These deeply woven stereotypes found in printed works translated into assumed characteristics of widows in daily life, which widows used and manipulated to protect, promote, and sustain the Catholic community secretly in England.

\textit{The Vulnerable Widow}

Strides in digitizing early modern English texts allows for a quantifiable understanding of words and their meaning in the period. Under review in this section are works within Early

\footnote{169 Cavallo and Warner, \textit{Widowhood}, 9.}
English Books Online, or EEBO, a commercial product that allows users to access more than 125,000 early modern English printed texts. The database claims to have a digital facsimile page of virtually every work printed in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and British North America from 1473 to 1700. While EEBO does not include a function to search the full text of a book or read a modern-type transcription of the text, through Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, or EEBO-TCP, users can read the full transcriptions of works on EEBO, and more importantly search the electronic text transcriptions. To date, 32% of the texts on EEBO are transcribed through EEBO-TCP and the project continues to be funded by more than 150 libraries worldwide.  

A collocate program developed by the University of Lancashire allows researchers to search through EEBO-TCP for patterns in word usage and frequency. The use of collocates assumes that a word carries meaning outside of its single occurrence. Words that precede or follow another word in a sentence can also derive meaning in its use and context. By searching for words frequently occurring in the corpus of works in EEBO-TCP, the program uncovers patterns of word usage that are mathematically and statistically significant, meaning their co-occurrence is outside of chance in a text.  

For instance, the pairing of the words the and widow, while frequent, is not necessarily significant because it is a common co-occurrence in sentences. The program ranks co-occurring words by their log-likelihood value, a value that merges their frequency of occurrence with the likelihood of their occurrence in a sentence, in order to define their significance. By utilizing linguistic analysis in the form of collocates, this study shows that the most significant and frequent representations of widows in extant English texts was their

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vulnerability, due to their frequent discussion in works that recount biblical themes. Thus, at least in print culture, the overwhelming description of widows was one of destitution, poverty, and a lack of male guidance, resulting in an unassuming demographic devoid of power, authority, and influence. While utilizing a “mechanical, indefatigable, and unintelligent” computer-driven search of the early modern corpus of the English written word is neither comprehensive nor completely accurate, the benefits are numerous.\textsuperscript{172} For one, as argued by Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore, digitized searches treat all data equally and search everything with diligence, thereby limiting reader bias or error.\textsuperscript{173} At the click of a key, a researcher can scour thousands of texts from a wide variety of genres, including but not limited to literary works, dramas, sermons, liturgies, royal statutes and proclamations, broadsides, ballads, and popular pamphlets. Single words can then be broken down and analyzed alongside the frequent associations and patterns that accompany that word to draw an early modern interpretation of the contemporary meaning of the word, as found in extant printed texts. For example, Matthew Steggle draws parallels in order to understand abstract concepts such as the phrase “breaks of ice” or the idiom of “losing the question” in Shakespeare’s \textit{Measure for Measure}.\textsuperscript{174} Zeltia Blanco-Suarez examines how words undergo processes of grammaticalization over time in her analysis of the collocations of the terms \textit{dead} and \textit{deadly} in early modern

\textsuperscript{174} Steggle, “The Cruces of \textit{Measure for Measure},” 444, 449.
Figure 2.1: Representation of the top ten collocates based on their log-likelihood value, +/−3 words from the term *widow* in EEBO-TCP, using the collocate program from the University of Lancaster, https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk.

Figure 2.2: Representation of the top ten collocates based on their log-likelihood value, +/−3 words from the term *widows* in EEBO-TCP, using the collocate program from the University of Lancaster, https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk.
texts. This sort of linguistic analysis is an analytical tool through which we can understand how early modern writers found meaning and created meaning through words across genres.

By looking at which words are associated with widow and widows, the collocate program breaks down which words most frequently occur +/-3 words on either side of the term in a sentence. By understanding which words most commonly accompany widow and widows, one can quantify the significant words most frequently associated with singular or plural widows in the vast majority of early modern English printed literature. The two words most commonly associated with the term widow are fatherless and poor (Figure 2.1). This suggests that the rhetorical language accompanying widows in early modern literary conventions in large part invokes the image of destitution and isolation from male support. When investigating word association for the term widows, the top five words most commonly used in order of frequency from greatest to least are: orphans, fatherless, houses, poor, and devour (Figure 2.2). Thus, widows, in both the singular and plural form, were most commonly associated with notions of vulnerability, a descriptive stereotype that lies in contrast to the stereotypes of pious or lusty widows that dominate prevailing historiography. The discrepancy between the divergent stereotypes of vulnerable, pious, and lusty lays in differences provided by genre, with the vulnerable widow most commonly found in works based in scripture, such as biblical

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177 Collocates for the terms “widow” and “widowhood” were created using EEBO-TCP, through a corpus query textual analysis software created by the University of Lancaster, UK. https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk/. I am grateful for the assistance I received from both Andrew Hardie and Mark Knights in utilizing this tool. Biblical associations between widows and orphans, together with the stories of the widow’s mite and the parable of the persistent widow overwhelm discussions of widows in early modern literature. Biblical discussions of widows include but are not limited to Exodus 22:22, Deuteronomy 10:18, James 1:27, 1 Corinthians 7:8, and 1 Timothy 5:6-14. For the story of the widow’s mite, see Mark 12:42 and Luke 21:2. For the parable of the persistent widow, see Luke 18:1-8.
commentaries, the pious in prescriptive literature such as conduct books and sermons, with the lusty widow featured in comedic representations such as ballad, broadsides, and plays.

The overwhelming presence of terms of vulnerability associated with both widow and widows shows that biblical themes dominated early modern printed works about widows. The terms houses and devour are likely in relation to the scriptural discussion of Pharisees who devour widows’ houses in the book of Mark.\footnote{Mark 12:38-40.} It is prudent to conclude that the reason the term widow is most commonly associated with terms such as fatherless and poor is also due to the treatment of widows in scripture. Examples of widows in Old and New Testament passages include praises to God on his treatment of widows and the command for believers to safeguard widows, a poor and helpless demographic. Passages show that God “doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow\footnote{Deuteronomy 10:18.}; is a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows\footnote{Psalm 68:5.}; and “relieveth the fatherless and widow.”\footnote{Psalm 146:9.} Old and New Testament passages call on people to defend widows, not oppress widows, and to look after “widows in their affliction.”\footnote{James 1:27. Also see Isaiah 1:17 and Zechariah 7:10.} Exodus 22:22-24 strongly warns against taking advantage of widows, stating, “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.”\footnote{Exodus 22:22-24.} 1 Timothy 5 instructs a widow’s children and grandchildren to care for her, and warns that “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an
infidel.” Scripture projects this demographic as weak, fragile, and vulnerable, to the point that God threatens death to those who target widows with malicious intent. In fact, Israel’s sins that incur the wrath of God during the Age of the Prophets include the oppression of the fatherless and the widow.

Early modern English texts heavily feature these Old and New Testament passages. Biblical commentaries on the book of Ruth reveal the book’s namesake to be a vulnerable, poor widow who benefited from her humility when she presented herself to Boaz on the threshing floor. Richard Ferrers’ 1622 *The Worth of Women* reminds the reader that God gave a “speciall charge the widowe to defend.” He commends the poor widow of Sarepta, whom “the Lord doth worthy deeme” and praises the widow who gave a small offering to God in the story of the widow’s mite in both Mark 12:42 and Luke 21:2. One of the more grotesque warnings for those who do not heed the call to care for widows comes in the form of the song *A lanthorne for landlords*, a broadside ballad penned anonymously in 1640. The song recounts a “story of great woe” of a cruel landlord in Lincoln who cast out a widow and her children. In retribution for the wicked act, the song continues “But God forgetting not the wrong he did the Widdow poore, sent downe a fire from heaven, consumed all his store: By which this wicked mizer man,

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184 1 Timothy 5:8.
186 See Richard Bernard, *Ruth’s recompence: or a commentarie upon the booke of Ruth wherein is shewed her happy calling out of her owne country and people, into the fellowship and society of the Lords inheritance: her virtuous life and holy carriage amongst them: and then, her reward in God’s mercy, being by an honourable marriage made a mother in Israel: delivered in severall sermons, the breife summe whereof is now published for the benefit of the Church of God* (1628), *Early English Books Online*, Web, 19 July 2017 and Zacharie Boyd, *The garden of Zion wherein the life and death of godly and wicked men in scriptures are to be seene, from Adam unto the last of the Kings of Judah and Israel, with the good uses of their life and death* (1644), *Early English Books Online*, Web, 19 July 2017.
was brought to beggary, and likewise laid a grievous scourge upon his family.”

The landlord’s wife is eventually burned at the stake as a witch, his daughter becomes a “strumpet” in London, his eldest son is hanged for his involvement in a murder, and his youngest son is torn to pieces by wild dogs after he engaged in bestiality. The ballad ends, “Therefore let all hard-hearted men, by this example take. That God is just, and will be true, for woefull widdowes sake.”

The widow’s misfortune is turned on its head when she acquires all the landlord’s goods, and the fate of the wicked landlord’s family reflects common denigrations of widowhood: sexual deviance, economic uncertainty, and witchcraft. At once, the ballad depicts the extreme vulnerability some women experienced at the death of their husband, while acting as a tale of warning for the divine retribution that follows the harsh treatment of widows.

From the commentary, passages from the Bible, and the collocate summaries; an inference can be made about the early modern attitude towards widows that crossed religious and geographic lines. Whether a woman decided to remain a widow or not, they were lumped into a decidedly weak and vulnerable demographic, together with orphans and foreigners. Further stories of widows in the Bible resonate with this perception of vulnerability. In the book of Genesis, the widow Tamar tricked her father-in-law Judah into bed for her own protection after he failed to give her to his other son as promised. The story of the widow’s offering in Mark and Luke featured a poor widow who is praised as a vulnerable woman who gave everything to God. The parable of the persistent widow featured a widow who pled for justice from an

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190 Genesis 38:14.
unjust judge and was praised for her persistence, despite her lowly position.\textsuperscript{192} Perceptions of widows, rooted in scripture, centered on vulnerability inherent in the state of widowhood. Such vulnerability could cast widows to the margins of society. Poor widows’ financial reliance on family made them burdensome to both their relatives and community, which is why many histories have incorporated analyses of widows within studies of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{193} Keith Thomas’ book \textit{Religion and the Decline of Magic} discusses the place of widows in the decline of the manorial system, a system that catered to widows and granted a portion of their late husbands’ holdings to them. The deterioration of this system for the “dependent” and elderly “helps to explain why witches were primarily women, and probably old ones, many of them widowed.”\textsuperscript{194} Poor widows required economic and social support, they were isolated from male control, which could incite anxiety in a patriarchal society, and they lacked a male guardian to defend their reputation against rumors. This potential for community alienation caused widows to be frequent suspects of witchcraft.\textsuperscript{195} Similarly, Robin Briggs’ 2002 study of witchcraft argued that witches were more frequently individuals who alienated close-knit neighbors.\textsuperscript{196} One of the most infamous cases of witchcraft in England took place in the county of Lancashire. Local authorities executed ten women in 1612 on charges of witchcraft in connection to ten murders in the community. Of the Pendle witches of Lancashire, two of the most infamous were widows –

\textsuperscript{195} Merry Wiesner-Hanks argues that the majority of persons in isolated cases of witchcraft fit the stereotype of old, widowed women who were poor, looked odd, and behaved badly, \textit{Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 266. See also Lyndal Roper, \textit{Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe} (New York: Routledge, 1994). Although, Alison Rowlands has argued, along with Robin Briggs, that widows have been overrepresented in studies of witchcraft and that external religious, social and economic factors contributed more towards witchcraft accusations than gender, old age, and marital status. Rowlands maintains that less than half of accused women were widows. Alison Rowlands, “Witchcraft and Old Women in Early Modern Germany,” \textit{Past & Present} 173 (2001): 62-63.  
\textsuperscript{196} Briggs, \textit{Witches and Neighbors}, 356.
Alice Nutter and Elizabeth Device.\textsuperscript{197} Witchcraft cases were extreme examples of a widow’s alienation from her community and were therefore rare. More common was the notion that a widow was burdensome to society. Poor widows, particularly older widows, needed more support and, therefore, took advantage of Poor Laws or the generosity of relatives.\textsuperscript{198} A widow who no longer had the economic protection of her husband, or who suffered from infirmities or poverty, contributed little to society and became a burden to her community.

These real and perceived depictions of vulnerability and helplessness most often accompanied descriptions of widows in written genres rooted in scripture, such as biblical commentaries. These widows were passive victims of their marital status and gender and grouped into a category devoid of agency due to their lack of male support. Any actions undertaken by a widow in the texts described above, whether it was offering herself to a man, giving a small offering, or pleading for aid, were actions to combat her vulnerable state. In direct contrast to the vulnerable widow was the prescriptive typecast of the pious widow – a woman who devoted her autonomy and solitude to God.

\textit{The Chaste Widow}

While biblical commentaries and literary representations depicted widows as vulnerable, early modern prescriptive literature such as conduct books and sermons idealized widows as a chaste and pious group. The precedence for women to dedicate their widowhood to spiritual use was rooted in scripture. The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians formed the cornerstone for ancient and early modern writings that call widows to be chaste, pious, and godly. According to Paul, a widow was better suited to remain unmarried, rather than marry another. Paul wrote:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{197} See Thomas Potts and Sir Edward Bromley, \textit{Potts’s Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster} (London: Chetham Society, 1745).
\textsuperscript{198} Wiesner-Hanks, \textit{Women and Gender}, 96.
\end{quote}
I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn…\textsuperscript{199}

He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please [his] wife. There is a difference [also] between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please [her] husband.\textsuperscript{200}

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.\textsuperscript{201}

On the choice of remarriage, Paul prized celibacy over remarriage. Remaining unyoked guaranteed a widow’s freedom to devote herself to God. Paul’s words gave permission for a holy isolation engulfed with chastity and piety, with undivided interests. These biblical recommendations for widowhood infiltrated the writings of fifth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo, who praised the continued constancy and chastity of widowhood. In a 414 letter to Anicia Juliana, a widow and member of one of the most distinguished Christian families in Rome, he wrote, “While the excellence of chastity in widowhood is greater, it does not follow that in this state of life a Catholic widow is something greater than a member of Christ, but among the members of Christ she occupies a place superior to that of the married woman.”\textsuperscript{202} This superior placement comes at the high cost of holy chastity. He advised to “let spiritual pleasures take the place of carnal ones: reading, prayer, the psalms, good thoughts, being occupied with good works, looking forward to the next life, having one’s heart on high, and giving thanks for all

\textsuperscript{199} 1 Corinthians 7: 8-9.
\textsuperscript{200} 1 Corinthians 7:32-34.
\textsuperscript{201} 1 Corinthians 7: 39-40.
these things to the Father of lights.” Furthermore, Augustine cautioned that if widows were to break this vow of celibacy, even in a conscious desire for marriage, she incurred damnation. In fact, to Augustine, breaking a vow of celibacy was worse than adultery. Yet the choice of holy widowhood experienced benefits beyond holy excellence.

Early modern conduct books and sermons written by both Catholics and Protestants, on the European continent and in England, mirrored scriptural advice and encouraged widows to be pious, chaste, and solitary. A collocate search for the word *widowhood* – a term that denotes the state of being a widow instead of referring to individual widows – returns co-occurring words such as *virginity, perpetual, chaste, reproach, vow, and continency*, which shows that the theme most often associated with the term *widowhood* by authors of extant English texts was that of sexual control (Figure 2.3). In contrast to the terms of vulnerability seen in collocates of *widow* and *widows*, the term *widowhood*, an abstraction that depicts the state of being a widow, is most commonly associated with notions of chastity. Based on collocates, texts that discuss a widow or widows as individuals focus on their helplessness, while texts that discuss the state of widowhood itself focus on sexual control. This focus on control is why textual characterizations of widows as chaste and pious are mostly found in prescriptive literature such as sermons and conduct books. While not depictions of how actual widows acted – although they of course came with laudable examples of pious widows – these sources present what male English authors thought widows’ roles should be in society.

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204 Augustine, “Excellence of Widowhood,” 120-121.
One of the most popular conduct books from the humanist tradition was Juan Luis Vives’ *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book Called the Instruction of a Christian Woman*, published in Antwerp in 1523 and later translated into English, French, German, Castilian and Italian; evidence of the book’s popularity. Although the author was from Spain and spent most of his life in the Spanish Netherlands, the creation and readership of the book was closely tied to England. Henry VIII commissioned the original text from Vives to instruct his daughter, Mary

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According to Vives, even after the death of her husband, a widow was still to act in obedience to her husband’s wishes. He writes:

Wherefore a good widow ought to suppose that her husband is not utterly dead, but liveth both with life of his soul and beside with her remembrance…Then what should a Christian woman do? Let her keep the remembrance of her husband with reverence and not with weeping, and let her take for a solemn and a great oath to swear by her husband’s soul and let her live and do so as she shall think to please her husband, being now no man but a spirit and a divine thing…Also let her take him for her keeper and spy, not only of her deeds, but also of her conscience. Let her handle so her house and household and so bring up her children that her husband may be glad and think that he is happy to leave such a wife behind him.

These ideas fall in line with later Protestant and Catholic praise for the chaste, celibate, virtuous widow. According to this prescriptive literature, a good widow was to adhere to the same patriarchal hierarchy of society even after the death of her husband. Although he may be gone in physical form, his spirit maintained control over his widow’s actions and thoughts. Vives’ prescription for widows constituted an attempt to assert control on socially and politically autonomous women. Widows were to live cloistered lives of chastity and maintain their households as their husbands would have wished. Other authors continued in this vein by purporting that a good widow should be chaste and pious, no doubt in response to real anxieties about independent women. These works attempted to control a widow’s sexual appetite and govern her spiritual welfare. As argued by Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, conduct books published for widows during this period “show an almost obsessive

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206 Kehler, Shakespeare’s Widows, 20.
208 Kehler, Shakespeare’s Widows, 23.
concern for the chastity and decorum of their behavior.” One such pamphlet, *The women’s sharp revenge*, published in 1640 by two self-proclaimed spinsters, idealized widows who lived in chaste fidelity to their husband’s memory. Dorthea Kehler has argued that even on the post-Reformation English stage, Protestant male playwrights celebrated the pious widow and disparaged the lusty or remarrying widow.

After the Reformation, writings continued to value a life devoted to piety, charity, and chastity, from both the Catholic and Protestant front. Consider Leonardus Lessius’ *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity* (trans. 1621) and Fulvius Androtius’ *The Widdowe’s Glasse* (trans. 1621). For Catholic readers in the Protestant nation of England, these works by two Jesuits commended women’s sacrifice of remaining chaste, either as a virgin or as a widow, and supported, defended, and encouraged the vow of chastity. John Wilson, a priest from Staffordshire, brought *Vowed Chastity* and *Widdowe’s Glasse* from the continent to England, and translated, compiled, and dedicated both to Anne Vaux, the single woman who never married, was a frequent companion of Henry Garnet, and worked with her widowed sister, Eleanor Brooksby, harboring priests. Wilson appended *The Widdowe’s Glass* to *Vowed Chastity* and requested Anne deliver it to her widowed sister, Eleanor Brooksby, in recognition “for the long, constant, & most exemplar profession of that noble, and worthy state of chaste Widdowhood, may seeme to clayme a just Title thereunto.” Wilson translated both works from Latin to English in 1621 with *Permissa Superiorum*, so that Anne and Eleanor could benefit from the works’

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210 Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind*, 75. See pp. 305-327 for a reproduction of *The women’s sharp revenge*.
211 See pp. 305-327 in Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind* for a reproduction of *The women’s sharp revenge*.
encouragement and instruction. Lessius’ *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity* is divided into seven chapters, which detail the precedence for living a chaste life by using scripture, ecclesiastical histories, and theological arguments. He extolled the “manifold commodities” that accompanied a chaste life and maintained, “It freeith from the irksome flaury of Marriage, and from the troubles which belonge unto it; in both it delivereth the minde from infinite cares & troubles; finally in both it maketh it free, and at liberty to apply itself unto God, and to dwel as it were mentally and spiritually with the Blessed.”

By dedicating *Vowed Chastity* to Anne Vaux, Wilson singled out a female example for other English Catholics to emulate. In addition, by highlighting Vaux’s widowed sister, he also underscored an example of a Catholic widow to imitate. The author of *Widdowe’s Glass*, Fulvius Androtius, also highlighted Catholic widows in his text, including the two martyrs Anne Line and Margaret Clitherow, although Clitherow was still married at the time of her execution by pressing. Written sometime between 1601 and 1621 – between the date of Anne Line’s execution and the date of translation – *Widdowe’s Glasse* was a conduct book for Catholic widows, including those in Protestant England. Androtius talks of his “owne Iland of England” and commends the “true Valour and Constancy of devout widdowes, in our Countrey.” He commends those widows who, for the Catholic cause, endured imprisonment, loss of goods and fortunes, and those who died for their faith. The conduct book serves as encouragement, instruction, and as a defense of those who decided to remain chaste after widowhood and

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215 Androtius, *Widdowe’s Glasse*, 340-41. Margaret Clitherow was executed by being crushed to death by stones, or by “pressing”. This form of execution was generally carried out for individuals who refused to plea as a way to induce them to plea.
dedicated their lives to serving and worshipping God, particularly in a realm that was hostile to the Catholic faith.

The text begins by describing the variety of widows in society. He approved of those who sought to remarry for “temporall comfort and consolation,” yet chastised those who remarried due to their “disordinate appetite, or because she is very rich, or faire, or sought after by some one that is placed in a high degree.”²¹⁸ Androtius conceded that some widows remained chaste for respect from society or their children and not for God, and that some who desired to serve God in their chastity were instead bound and distracted by worldly necessity, e.g. children, household management, and/or family.²¹⁹ For Androtius, “The last sort of widdowes, are the true, & worthily so called, Widdowes, who dispatching themselves of all worldly impediments, do attend only to the service of God, contemplating him, and meditating on him day and night.”²²⁰ *Widdowe’s Glasse* contains a number of instructions for the chaste and pious widow, taken from scripture, the writings of St. Jerome, Augustine, and a long list of ancient examples of godly widows. Widows were to be sure that God took the place of their former husbands. They were to dedicate their body in servitude to God, banish all vanities, protect their reputation, adorn their soul and not their body, and be generous with their wealth.²²¹ Some of the more strict requirements set down by Androtius include the suggestion that widows were not to delight in songs but should only choose recreation in her house with her family, and the avoidance of makeup. He stated, “such ornament of the body becometh not one, that serveth Christ, but rather one who serveth Antichirst. And if any looke towards heaven with such a face, Christ will not

know them, since they have changed that shape which he gave them.” Widdowe’s Glass instructed widows on how to look, what to do with their money, how to act in public, how to act in private, how to converse with members of the opposite sex, what to say (which was to be very little and only out of necessity), and what to think. Androtius recommended that widows should not think highly of themselves, “rather esteeme thy selfe the more base and abject” and that they should “think often that within a short tyme, you are to dye, and leave this world; and so, you shall have little lift to thinke of a second worldly marriage.”

Androtius and Lessius both prized chastity as perfection, for the single woman and the widow. Yet, when it came to widows, Lessius’ sought to control all aspects of widows’ time and resources. These prescriptions for widows are not unlike Protestant recommendations for a woman who had lost her husband. William Page’s prescription for a godly widow is described in his work A Widowwe Indeed written in England in the early seventeenth century. He wrote:

Where the honour is great…so the labour and striving cannot be small…for not only she who hath buried her husband, no nor she who can live chastely and contentedly without an husband (although it be a singular victory to conquer that affection) is the widow I have spoken of, but there is also required unto a widow indeed many inward virtues and heavenly endowments of the mind.

Early modern English Protestant authors also depicted the ideal widow as a woman who exhibited self-control, chastity, and obedience in her solitude. Gilbert Primrose, Reformed minister of the French and Walloon refugee church in London composed a commentary in 1617

222 Androtius, Widdowe’s Glass, 276-77, 280-81.
223 Androtius, Widdowe’s Glass, 293, 286.
225 As discussed in the introduction to Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner’s Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, 7.
on 1 Corinthians. Primrose comments on not only the sacred benefit of widowhood, but also the temporal benefits. He writes:

In like manner, the widow is happier if she so abide, happier indeed not towards God, who is not moved with these outward things wherein godliness consisteth not; but in respect of men, and of the domesticall life, in so much as being a widow, she hath not such care, nor so many distractions in the time of persecution, as the married woman hath…and the widow remaining so, did serve God in her house.

Like Primrose’s suggestion that solitude begets happiness and Page’s discussion of a godly widow’s virtues, Protestant funeral sermons encouraged living widows to remain chaste, obedient, and godly in order to emulate the recently deceased widows. Popular in both Germany and England, pastors read these sermons at the widow’s internment, then printed, distributed and exchanged them among the family and other pastors. In a sermon preached in February of 1587 in Barkeshire, Bartholomew Chamberlaine told all attending the funeral that Lady Anne Countess of Warwick was a “godly widow” and “a spectacle, a Ladie by birth, a Countes by marriage, by title right honorable, a widow of a virtuous life.” Such sermons worked to honor the dead while providing an ideal image of widowhood for female listeners and readers of the sermon.

The ideal widow, as prescribed by both Protestant and Catholic male authors, sought solitary lodgings, remained chaste, engaged in patronage, and lived a virtuous life. Whether the

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227 Gilbert Primrose, Jacobs vow, opposed to the vowes of monkes and friers. The first volume in two booke; of the Holy Scripture, and evangelical counsels (Bodelian Library, 1617), Early English Books Online, Web, 14 April 2014, p. 215.
writer followed the pope or considered him the antichrist, both agreed that the ideal widow remained in control of herself and adhered to the hierarchal order of patriarchal society. In contrast to the vulnerable widows portrayed in scripture and biblical commentaries, those featured in sermons and conduct books had agency. They made choices about their behavior, sexuality, dress, and actions. The chaste widow was a woman to be emulated and widowhood was a state to be desired. They were not passive victims of their marital status, but instead found agency in service to God. This image of the ideal, godly widow stood in direct contrast to another common stereotype of widows in early modern England – the “merry” or “lusty” widow.

The Lusty (Remarrying) Widow

Contemporary portrayals of the lusty widow in comedies and ballads depict a rich, independent, and worldly woman with an insatiable sexual appetite who preyed on young men.231 Such widows were the antithesis of the pious widow. They were out of control, threatened the patriarchal hierarchy of society, and led God-fearing men to sin. This focus on sexual deviance reflects early modern ideas about a woman’s anatomy that date back to the ancient ideas of Aristotle. The ancient Greek philosopher assumed that because women were the weaker sex and men were the perfect sex (thereby making women deformed deviants), that women had a more insatiable sex drive than men. Such an idea was not confined to England but continued across Europe until the eighteenth century.232 When a woman’s husband died, her sexual desire would drive her to promiscuity or the need to remarry. Contemporary medical knowledge and popular perceptions of widows saw them as sexual deviants with an anatomic

231 Cavallo and Warner, Widowhood, 9.
232 Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender, 38.
desire to engage in regular sex.233 Young widows in particular were more worrisome because, due to their age and sexual experience, they were more prone to fall into sexual licentiousness.234

Male playwrights frequently included the caricature of a wealthy, manipulative, sexually charged widow who favored rapid remarriages.235 Jennifer Panek’s wide sweeping study of widows in early modern English comedy proposes three reasons for the “lusty widow” trope: their threat to domestic government, the husband’s fear of a sexually charged wife, and the suitor’s fantasy of financial security in marrying a rich widow.236 George Chapman’s popular 1612 comedy The Widow’s Tear, produced in both Blackfriars and Whitefriars, featured all three themes about widows. The play features two “lusty widows,” the first of whom is Eudora, who abandoned her vow of celibacy and disregarded the potential affront to her wealth by marrying a poor man, in order to satisfy her sexual desires. Tharsalio’s success in wooing Eudora, despite her vow to “in memory of him to preserve till death the unstain’d honor of a widow’s bed,” reveals that women are weak and inconstant.237 In the other plot, a woman named Cynthia is appalled by Eudora’s decision to break her vow, to the point that her husband, Lysander, decides to test her own resolve. After faking his death, he approaches his wife, Cynthia, in his own empty tomb, disguised as a soldier, attempting to become his own cuckold.238 When he succeeds in wooing his own wife, disguised as a stranger, he laments:

234 Henderson and McManus, Half Humankind, 75.
238 Chapman, Widow’s Tears, xvii.
This mirror of nuptial chastity, this votress of widow-constancy, to change her faith, exchange kisses, embraces, with a stranger, and by my shame withstood, to give the utmost earnest of her love to an eightpenny sentinel; in effect, to prostitute herself upon her husband’s coffin! Lust, impiety, hell, womanhood itself, add, if you can, one step to this!\(^{239}\)

Even when the masquerading Lysander tells Cynthia that he was the one who killed her husband, she still proclaims her love, refuses to report the murder to the Governor, and states with an embrace “Love must slave any murder. I’ll be the judge of Thee, dear love, and these shall by thy pains, instead of iron, to suffer these soft chains.”\(^{240}\) Eventually the farce is uncovered and the couple is reunited, yet throughout the comedy are themes surrounding the inconstancy and frailty of women, especially widows.\(^{241}\) The theme of widows’ frailty is also present in Middleton’s More Dissemblers Besides Women (c.1615) and in some of William Shakespeare’s work at the turn of the seventeenth century. Mistress Overdone married nine times in Measure for Measure and the question of remarriage is an obvious theme in Hamlet, particularly when the protagonist states his infamous “Frailty, thy name is woman,” in reference to his mother’s haste remarriage.\(^{242}\)

To Jennifer Panek, the caricature of the lusty widow is complex, because she represents “a woman who is the object of both intense desire and considerable anxiety.”\(^{243}\) Wealthy widows’ economic prospects lured potential suitors, while their assumed insatiable sexuality and

\(^{239}\) Chapman, Widow’s Tears, 86. V.i. 117-123.

\(^{240}\) Chapman, Widow’s Tears, 89. V.i.195-198.

\(^{241}\) Chapman, Widow’s Tears, xiii.


\(^{243}\) Panek, Widows and Suitors, 79.
independence of mind caused alarm. A 1629 ballad titled “A Batchelor’s Resolution”
encapsulates the anxiety behind marrying a widow:

But yet if I my choice should have
A mayde should be my wife,
I would not be a widdowe’s slave,
I’d rather lose my life:
If I should wed a Widow old,
I had better take a younger,
For Widowes will not be contrould,
Yet I can stay no longer.244

While the sexually charged remarrying widow was intended to elicit a comedic effect, it is
possible that the character of the “lusty” widow was based on a real anxiety surrounding
independent women devoid of male authority – the same anxiety behind prescriptions of the
pious and chaste widow described above. As Dorthea Kehler maintains in her study of widows in
Shakespeare’s plays, “On consideration, widows were apt to be a nuisance all around. Even the
celibate wealthy widow could threaten patriarchalism because money conferred autonomy.”245
Such unease towards an autonomous female demographic is evident in the fact that even widows
who devoted their time and money to religious efforts incurred scrutiny and whispers of sexual
misconduct.

In medieval Europe, as well as early modern England, close relationships between priests
and widows was fodder for fantastical and comedic anticlericalism in literature. A single woman
hosting, hiding, or maintaining a single man within the private confines of her house walls
naturally stimulated talk of sexual or amorous relationships between priests and such women.
Since the fourth century, celibacy for priests was enforced, yet continued councils and edicts

244 As quoted in Jennifer Panek, Widows and Suitors, 46, from Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., The Pepys Ballads,
245 Kehler, Shakespeare’s Widows, 40.
through the centuries suggest that there were priests who defied such requirements. Anticlericalism and images of lecherous priests were part of the popular literary genre of the fabliaux in medieval Europe. One such work, *The Priest Who Peeked*, a thirteenth-century French fabliaux by Guèrin, features a lying and adulterous priest who tricked an unsuspecting peasant into watching the priest fornicate with the peasant’s wife. Filled with love for the wife, and knowing she returned the feelings, the priest knocked at the peasant’s door one night and, though he knew they were sitting down to supper, cried out that he saw the peasant having sex with his wife. The peasant denied it, and replied that they were simply sitting at the table to eat, but the priest assured the peasant that he knew what he saw through a hole in the door. He tells the peasant to trade places with him, the priest sitting down at the table and the peasant going outside. The fabliaux continues:

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And there the other man was, peeking
At the little hole, through which he spied
His lovely wife’s exposed backside
And the priest, riding on top of her.
“May God Almighty help you, Sir,”
The peasant called, “Is this a joke?”
The parson turned his head and spoke:
“No, I’m not joking. What’s the matter?
Don’t you see: I have your platter.
I’m eating supper at your table.”
“Lord, this is like a dream or fable.
If I weren’t hearing it from you,
I never would believe it true
That you aren’t screwing my wife.”
“I’m not, Sir! Hush! As God’s my life,
That’s what I thought I saw you do.”
The peasant said, “I guess that’s true.”
That’s how the peasant got confused,
Bewitched, befuddled, and confused,
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By the priest and by his own weak brain
And didn’t even feel the pain.  

The fabliaux presents a stupid peasant and a clever priest, a common trope recognizable to medieval audiences. The story reinforces prevailing stereotypes of lecherous priests and adulterous women. The line that describes the love the woman had for the priest is also rooted in a prevailing fabliaux fashion. This fabliaux in particular, while written in medieval France, highlights a long-standing distrust of clergy that extended into early modern England.

Accusations of indecency, adultery, seduction, and sodomy between Catholic priests and women in Elizabethan and early Stuart England connects over time the anticlericalism of medieval Europe with early modern Protestant attitudes in England. Protestant authorities received numerous reports of improper relations between priests and single women, including widows. Frauncis Williams, a woman who served in a household frequented by priests, confession in an examination in 1598 that many priests maintained unsavory relationships with women in their circles. The examination states, “Shee further saith, that the priests at theyr departure from Denham, tooke everyone thence his woman with him; Ma. Edmunds the Iesuit had for his darling mistris Cressy, then a widow, who was a daily guest there, and one that did contribute very much both to him, and the rest of the priests. Anne Smith was at the disposition of Ma. Driland, Sarah Williams of maister Dibdale.” A 1601 letter to Robert Cecil from one John Byrde purports that an unmarried woman by the name of Mrs. Jane Leake was the concubine of a “Jesuit Jerrard”, of whom “she has received great maintenance, like as he has from her received many kind favours, in as open mutual love and liking as any unmarried lovers

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247 As quoted in Eichmann, *Cuckolds, Clerics, and Countrymen*, 46.
248 Eichmann, *Cuckolds, Clerics, and Countrymen*, 44.
249 “The examination of Friswood alias Frauncis Williams, taken upon oath the second of March 1598,”in *A declaration of egregious popish impostures to withdraw the harts of her Maiesties subiects from their allegiance*, edited Samuel Harsnett (1603) *Early English Books Online*, Web, May 2014, p. 236.
may do.” Anne Vaux’s relationship with Henry Garnet was widely considered sexual in nature. After Garnet’s implication in the Gunpowder Plot, Anne Vaux, a renowned priest harborer, faced questioning from the Privy Council who accused her of a sexual relationship with Garnet, a common accusation towards female Catholics. Clandestine letters, sometimes scribed in orange juice, passed between the two while Garnet was imprisoned and awaiting execution point to a close relationship between the single woman and her confessor. One penned by Vaux in March 1606 reads “For God sake advies me what cours to take…being with out you is not life but deathe now.” Such intimate correspondence, together with their frequent cohabitation as priest and priest harborer was easy fodder for scandal. Protestant authors frequently described Catholicism in sexualized and deviant terms. Rome and the pope were characterized as the “whore of Babylon,” and convents were described as “common stewes” or brothels, where popish priests are likely to “set out three or fower women to hire, to increase of their revenues,” as stated by the dean of Exeter, Matthew Sutcliffe.

However, for the widows featured in this study, there is scant evidence of reported scandalous liaisons, whether real or fabricated, with their confessors. For early modern Protestants, a longstanding narrative of sexual misconduct on the part of the clergy and the popular caricature of the “lusty widow” should have easily lent itself to the anti-Catholic polemic of post-Reformation England. The historical precedent of widows featuring as helpmates to priests, together with the perceived “feminization of Catholicism” should have drawn a clear link

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253 Frances Dolan, Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-century Print Culture (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).
to widows as active religious dissidents. Yet, it appears that this early modern stereotype did little to impact the image or actions of Dorothy Lawson, Lady Magdalen Montague, Anne Howard, and others. As discussed in chapter one, the Elizabethan legislative agenda focused on controlling Catholic men and their wives, not widows or single women. There is no evidence that priest-hunters saw a pattern in the role of widows in harboring priests. The only acknowledgement we have is Topcliffe’s pleading to Burghley to consider the role of women. When it comes to the cultural context of widowhood, despite the popularity of the “lusty widow” on the stage, stereotypes of threatening and sexual widows appears to have had little impact on the perception of widows in reality. Instead, as will be shown in the remaining chapters, their gender and marital status acted as a cover for subversive action, instead of an advertisement for culpability. The widows in this study adhered to, used, and manipulated the stereotypes of piety and vulnerability, which eased anxieties surrounding the power and authority inherent in their marital status, and thereby avoided the stereotype of the lusty widow. They vowed to remain widows, built or adapted dower houses in solitary locations, gave money to the poor, fed the hungry, and devoted themselves to God; although, this was all in the name of Catholicism. In this way, they stayed within the parameters of a patriarchal society and managed their reputation in order to avoid the lusty stereotype trope. The following chapters will show that Catholic widows’ adherence to the existing prescription in early modern English print culture that widows

255 For a discussion of gender and Catholicism, see Frances Dolan, Whores of Babylon and Laurence, Lux-Sterritt, “Virgo Becomes Virago’: Women in the Accounts of Seventeenth-Century English Catholic Missionaries,” Recusant History 30, 4 (October 2011): 538. The feminization of Catholicism is also examined by Stephen Haliczer in Sexuality in the Confessional: A Sacrament Profaned (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Haliczer examines sexual solicitation during the sacrament of confession, as found in cases from tribunals from 1530 to 1819 in Spain. This study shows that women in particular were more apt to perform the sacrament of confession, and therefore more often in the presence of priests, 194.


257 Chapter 4 will discuss how adherence to societal norms and keeping the peace was potentially more important to authorities than religious conscience.
be solitary and chaste helped to camouflage their subversive actions. Understanding the prevailing prescriptive stereotypes of widowhood in English culture helps to uncover the cultural framework in which Catholic widows worked. It is within this framework that widows were able to manipulate and utilize established expectations to create unique opportunities for religious subversion. Yet, manipulating prevailing stereotypes surrounding widowhood were not the only factors that assisted subversive action. Widows’ unique social and economic independence merged with their chaste and vulnerable role in society to create a demographic above suspicion.

**The Economic Reality of Widowhood**

Why moure you so, you that be widdowes? Consider how long you have been in subjection under the predominance of parents, of your husbands, now you may be free in liberties, and free *proprii iuris* at your own law.\(^{258}\)

This excerpt from *The Lawes Resolutions of Women’s Rights* published in 1632 by an unknown author denotes the independence available to women following the death of their husbands. While cultural stereotypes pointed to widowhood as a status of social isolation and poverty, ironically many widows were able to wield substantial wealth following the death of their husbands and maintain economic independence.\(^{259}\) Despite the cultural tensions described above regarding the popular perceptions of widows in society as vulnerable, in reality property law in early modern England gave some widows a great deal of social and economic autonomy. In fact, widows more than any married or single women had more autonomy and control over

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financial affairs. This was in large part because she was not accountable to her husband or her parents. Investigations into these unique economic and social conditions for widows in a patriarchal society have dominated the prevailing historiography of widowhood, resulting in a number of studies that discuss widowhood and work, court battles, estate management, the question of remarriage, and the dynamics of the family. The purpose of this section is to sketch a broad picture of the economic and social frameworks that influenced and assisted the actions of the widows in this dissertation, including a brief discussion of inheritance law, the economic prospects of widows, and the remarriage rates of widows. Of course, not all widows enjoyed economic and social prosperity. As Kathleen Llewellyn states, “The early modern widow was a figure of extremes. The wealthy widow was more independent and potentially

more powerful, both legally and socially, than other women; the poor widow, lacking a husband to support her, was frequently destitute and utterly defenseless.”

However, for a number of widows, the death of a husband resulted in the acquisition and control of both land and money, even for widows whose husbands died without making a will. Ecclesiastical law of intestate inheritance (in place for when husbands died without making a will) maintained that widows were entitled to one-third of the husband’s personal property. The remaining two-thirds were to be divided equally among the surviving children. If no children survived from the marriage, the entirety of the husband’s property would pass to the widow. For those men who made a will, studies show that widows were the principal beneficiaries of the will, generally receiving more than their allotted third of a share. For a woman whose husband made a will, there were seven possible outcomes for her provision, as categorized in Lynn Botelho’s 2002 study on old age provisions in Suffolk. These categories include “(a) the widow received the entire estate; (b) the property and/or goods were divided between the widow and heir; (c) the widow had use of the property and buildings for only a set period of time; (d) a cash annuity was paid to the surviving spouse; (e) the testator’s wife received a single, lump-sum legacy; (f) the widow received only household goods and tools; and (g) the couples’ children were to provide care, food, and housing for the surviving widow as they saw fit.”

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263 Amy Louise Erickson, “Property and Widowhood in England 1660-1840” in Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, eds. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1999), 152. Erickson’s study of wills in seventeenth century England finds that approximately 70 percent of people died without making a will.
264 Erickson, Women and Property, 162.
265 Botelho, “The old woman’s wish,” 63.
seven possible outcomes included either property, buildings, or cash to facilitate the financial security of the widow, thereby ensuring a degree of independence as well.

One study in particular highlights the opportunities afforded to widows and the bequests available to them. In 1993, Amy Louise Erickson examined wills from fourteen English locations from the fourteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. Erickson found that most men listed their wives as the executrix of the will, thereby giving their widow a great amount of responsibility in insuring the proper carrying out of the will. While Erickson postulates that this could be due to the source pool and the number of wills that have survived, her figures still show that men frequently left the management of the estate to the widow. In Yorkshire, 89 percent of married men listed their wives as sole executrix. As a comparative between Yorkshire and the metropolitan London, Vivien Brodsky found that 80 percent of men made their wives sole executrix. While some men also named a male overseer – generally a relative or a family friend – their role was one of assistance not domination. A vast majority of testators appointed their widows complete control over their property. In terms of bequests, both Brodsky and Erickson found that women whose husband left a will generally received more than their allotted one-third of the estate required by ecclesiastical law. Most of the time, the bequest included both land and the house in which the couple lived. Erickson shows that one quarter of the wills specifically mention the dwelling house, and she postulates that the widows of the 75 percent of men who do not mention houses still occupied the original house. According to Erickson, most widows occupied the dwelling house after the death of a husband.

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266 Erickson, Women and Property, 157.
267 Erickson, Women and Property, 159.
269 Erickson, Women and Property, 161.
270 Erickson, Women and Property, 163.
A widow, more than a single woman, had the privilege to set up her own household because she had experience previously managing a household under her husband. In fact, Amy Froide shows that widows headed 12.9 percent of households in early modern England while singlewomen only headed 1.1 percent, yet there were twice as many singlewomen in England than widows. The independence from a male-controlled household and the authority to manage their own household was unique to their particular marital status. This independence, combined with the common role of widows as a landlord to bring in income, meant that it would have not been uncommon for men and women to come and go from a widow’s house. This presents yet another opportunity, provided by widowhood, for the clandestine concealment of priests within the widow’s house. The advantages of widowhood, specific to priest harboring, will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Parallel to the work of Erickson, Brodsky, and Froide, Botelho’s 2002 study of widows’ old age provisions reached a similar conclusion in regards to the financial wellbeing of widows from the bequests of their husbands. In her examination of wills in early modern Suffolk, Botelho found that “Whether the newly widowed woman was old or young, her provision was geared toward seeing her into and through old age. These widows were also remarkably successful. Despite the downward social mobility and life-cycle poverty associated with old age, not one widow provided for in this fashion in either Poslingford or Cratfield ended up on parish poor relief.” Within the villages of Cratfield and Poslingford, widows were frequently housed independently. One in four surviving widows were given all lands, tenements, and hereditaments for life and forty-one percent of yeomen passed on some combination of land and property to

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272 Botelho, “The old woman’s wish,” 63.
widows. While Botelho found that age and social status had an important impact on the unique provisions for widows, she argues that widows were not tied to the good will of their children or community to the extent that previous historians have suggested. In fact, Botelho found that the arrangement of a widow living with, and dependent upon, an adult child was more common during the fifteenth century than in the early modern period.

These figures do not represent the variance that existed between wealthy and poor couples, or within unhappy marriages that ended with the husband vindictively leaving his wife out of his will, nor does it represent the number of widows who renounced their third due to the debt incurred by their husbands in order to avoid a troublesome estate. However, the work of Botelho, Erickson, and Froide do show that a number of widows were entitled to property or cash following the death of their husband. They enjoyed financial security and domestic autonomy and they functioned as heads of households in the absence of their husbands.

Despite the frequent negative popular perceptions and difficult social position of widows, property law allowed women like Dorothy Lawson to gain economic and social autonomy. This ability to own property and maintain a household provided an opportunity for Dorothy Lawson and other Catholic widows to use domestic space as strongholds for Catholic preservation. In fact, widows were the only women in early modern England who could maintain economic independence without formal male supervision.

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274 See Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villages in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
For some, widowhood could be a temporary and adjustable social status; although, a widow’s age, sexual experience, and economic autonomy all contributed to society’s anxieties about remarrying widows. As already discussed, for playwrights in early modern England, remarrying widows were comedic figures who provoked feelings of contempt instead of sympathy.\footnote{277 Todd, “The remarrying widow,” 54.} In her study of widowhood in Renaissance Florence, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber discusses the notion of the ‘cruel mother’ who abandoned her children and her previous family in favor of economic security with a new husband.\footnote{278 Klapisch-Zuber, “The Cruel Mother,” 117.} Opponents of remarriage perceived the remarrying widow as a woman who would readily rid herself of her previous responsibilities in favor of social and economic stability.

Studies have shown that aged widows were often anxious about remarrying, since entering into another marriage would place her once again under the control of a man. As Fulvius Androtius cautions against the yoke of remarriage in *Widdowe’s Glasse*, God has “therby made thee free from the servitude of men...you know by experience how many troubles, cares & anguishes of mind marriage drawes with it: Now that you have vomited up all the bitterness thereof, wherefore will you be again caught with the same?”\footnote{279 Androtius, *Widdowe’s Glasse*, 297.} The ballad *The Cunning Age*, printed on a broadside by John Cart in London around 1625, contains a conversation between a regretful re-married woman and a widow.\footnote{280 John Cart, *The Cunning Age*, or, a re-married woman repenting her marriage, rehearsing her husband’s dishonest carriage being a pleasant dialogue between a re-married woman, a widow, and a young wife, (1625), *Early English Books Online*, Web, April 2014.} The broadside portrayed the social tension widows faced with the question of remarriage. The remarried woman tells the widow that she was mistaken to marry a boy who now “romes among Whoores”.\footnote{281 Cart, *The Cunning Age*.} The conversation continues:
Widow:
Oh, who would imagine that such a young Lad,
That scarce was worth twelue pence with al that he had,
Should wed a rich woman, and vse her so bad?
I trust I shall neuer be so doting mad,
[...]o match in this coozening Age, &c.

Married Woman:
The griefe that I suffer can hardly be told,
Among Whores and Knaues he consumeth my gold,
And if I reprooue him, he tels me I scold,
I dare not dispose of mine owne as I would.
Oh fie on this doting Age,
Oh fie on this doting Age.

Widow:
Well, by your example I warning will take,
With no S[...]ip-iacke boy a match I will make;
Two Sutors I haue, but I both will forsake,
For some that are fond, as they brew let them bake;
I'le take heed of this cunning Age,
I'le take heed of this cunning Age. 282

From this ballad, it is apparent that the remarried woman’s husband married her for her wealth, which was a common fear among women who gained economically from her previous husband’s death. Her economic wealth, coupled with her social fragility, made widows an easy target for young men. Similarly, in 1595 poet Anthony Copley wrote, “One ask’d an ill-favor’d widow why she did not marry: she answered: Because if any marrie me, it will be rather for my goods, then for my own sake.”283

Fears that remarriage would be the result of a leeching young man were already prominent in popular print culture. Such comedic representations reflected reality, as Barbara Todd’s study of Abingdon reveals that remarriage rates declined from 50 percent in the sixteenth

282 Cart, The Cunning Age.
283 Anthony Copley, Wits fittes and fancies Fronted and entermedled with presidents of honour and wisdom (Bodleian Library, 1595), Early English Books Online, Web, April 2014, p. 82.
century to 23.5 percent in the eighteenth century. While these numbers are location specific, there seems to be a general downward trend in the percentage of remarriages in early modern England.\(^{284}\) Lynn Botelho’s study of old-age provisions for widows in England shows that continued widowhood “was particularly favored by the village’s leading families: the local gentry and the wealthiest yeomen…. In all, a widow’s live-in accommodation clause accounted for only 21% of all widows’ provisions in Cratfield, and was certainly not the unquestioned fate of the aged widow.”\(^{285}\) Botelho suggests that continued widowhood may have been favored amongst the wealthier of society. Vivan Brodsky’s study of widows in late Elizabethan London found that only 35% of widows remarried in the metropolis.\(^{286}\)

While age and economic status could change a widow’s propensity to remarry, studies reveal a downward trend in the remarriage rate, despite the financial and social security ensured by finding a new match. A number of factors could have contributed towards this downward trend, including a woman’s uneasiness entering into a new union, as discussed above, along with the unlikelihood of finding a new match due to a woman’s age or wealth.\(^{287}\) A desire to maintain a holy devotion to God was another reason to remain a widow, following centuries of texts that praised such a vow of celibacy. In addition, punitive wills that required the woman to remain a widow in order to receive her bequests and endowments caused some widows to forego remarriage, although this type of will was rare.\(^{288}\) While the topic of remarriage was a useful anecdote for comedic relief by playwrights, in reality a great number of women never remarried. In fact, none of the women in this study, who used opportunities provided by widowhood for the

\(^{284}\) Barbara J. Todd, “The Remarrying Widow”, 64.

\(^{285}\) Botelho, “The old woman’s wish,” 66.

\(^{286}\) Brodsky, “Widows in Late Elizabethan London”, 142.

\(^{287}\) Brodsky found that men of all ages remarry more often and more rapidly than widowed women, particularly aged widowed women. “Widows in Late Elizabethan London”, 123.

\(^{288}\) Brodsky, “Widows in Late Elizabethan London”, 144.
benefit of the Catholic mission, chose to remarry. For example, in the biography of Dorothy Lawson, author William Palmes writes, “Grief and sorrow for the loss of her dearest partner so trench’d on her vitall parts…she intended to expend the rest of her life like a solitary sparrow in the holes of a rock, or morning turtle, that never had mate but one, and vow’d never to know another.”

Similarly, the biography of Lady Magdalen Montague states, “For her husband being dead, the Lord Cobham, a man of great estate, honor, and authority in the realm, did mot earnestly seek her in marriage…but she gave him a resolute denial, that thenceforward she was no more solicited by suitors. This example is not ordinary in England in this so corrupt an age.”

In addition, Anne Howard, the wife of martyr Philip Howard refused to remarry after his death in the Tower. Her biographer wrote that during his imprisonment, “she made a firm resolution with which she did acquaint the Earl by Letter, that if she shou’d survive him, (contrary to her desire) never to marry more. The which as he could not be displeas’d at, it proceeding out of love to him, so would he not accept of it as a binding promise, but left her, as he said, to the liberty which God and his Church in such cases did permit.”

Her biographer further states, “She had made a constant resolution to live and die a widow.” All three of these women made a conscious choice to remain a widow, as told by their confessors. The women in this study rejected the choice of remarriage in exchange for a vow to God, and oftentimes a “ghostly father”. The choice of isolation and autonomy by some Catholic widows was somewhat

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290 Richard Smith, *An Elizabethan Recusant House*, ed. A.C. Southern (London: Sands & Co., 1954), 32. While Smith remarks that Montague’s choice was unique in that “corrupt age”, insinuating frequent remarriages as the norm, recent studies, along with the numerous examples provided by this study, show that her choice was not all that unique.
291 Duke of Norfolk, E.M., ed., *The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel and of Anne Dacres, His Wife* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857), 199. Not only did Howard keep this vow, but she renewed it several times every year, in the same fashion as some religious men.
292 *Lives*, 201.
common in early modern England, and would prove to be advantageous to the Catholic mission in England.

The combination of economic independence and social autonomy some widows enjoyed inspired unease in the patriarchal early modern English society. Widows were *femme soles*, without a male protector, yes, but also without a male authority figure. Thus, prescriptive literature, as shown in the first section, encouraged a social role for widows as pious, chaste, and solitary women, devoted to God and out of the way. Comedic representations of widows revolved around two issues—money and sex. Dorthea Kehler argues that the entire stereotype of lusty widows in fact revolved around the male fear of competition and lack of control of the demographic. Kehler states:

If widows were figured as lusty, the fantasied fear of their sexuality could mask a very real fear of women as economic competitors, taking scarce employment away from men. In one way or another, wealth and the power it shadowed was inevitably the issue underlying discourses of widowhood in England and its theater. By revising and repressing economic motives, a gendered ideology worked to obscure political shortcomings. Small wonder that among all categories of women Renaissance writers satirized, widows took top honors.  

There is a connection between the social and economic realities of widowhood, and their popular perceptions in early modern English texts. Widowhood enjoyed a sense of independence unique to women, and prescriptive literature called for women to harness this autonomy and devote themselves to God, thereby controlling their potential to disrupt the community. Those who did not and acted outside the role of the “pious widow” were censured and made into a comedic trope as a lusty widow. Such authoritative and financially stable widows defied the view of widows as vulnerable and in need of continual care, as proposed by scripture, sermons, and biblical commentary. Each stereotype addressed the fact that widows were autonomous, out of

293 Kehler, *Shakespeare’s Widows*, 41.
control, and potentially powerful. Some Catholic widows during this time, as shown in the following section and in the following chapters, harnessed this independence, manipulated their societal roles and stereotypes, and used to their advantage the expectations, vulnerabilities, and conditions of their marital status and gender.

**Widows’ Houses: Shifting Strategies of the Jesuit Mission**

As has been shown in the previous two sections, widows were a somewhat unsettling population within early modern society due to their independence from male authority and their economic autonomy. Among Catholics, widows with such resources offered specific opportunities for clandestine practices that other Catholics lacked – a government that was not inclined to target them and the resources that helped to protect those the government was inclined to pursue. The previous chapter revealed that sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century legislation focused on controlling the Catholic wife, while largely ignoring the widow. Up to this point, this chapter has shown that the competing stereotypes of widows as at once pious, vulnerable, and potentially dangerous resulted in an ambiguous cultural identity. What is more, their economic and social autonomy created financial stability, independence, and a freedom of time and resources. The opportunity for elusion provided by these social, cultural, and economical frameworks of widowhood was not lost on the Jesuit priests. The remainder of this chapter will examine the late-sixteenth-century Jesuit priests who recognized the unique role of widows in the English Mission and the seventeenth-century Protestant authorities who slowly began to acknowledge the danger of widows to religious uniformity. Male leaders among both Catholics and Protestants recognized that the combination of the perceived vulnerability of widows, together with their real financial and social autonomy, meant that they offered unique benefits to the preservation of Catholicism, for good or ill.
Jesuit Priests and the Role of Widows

As discussed in the first chapter, the arrival of Jesuit priests to English shores, the impeding conflict with Catholic Spain, and heightened anxiety towards Catholics amidst plots real and imagined led to a distinct shift in policy regarding recusants by the Elizabethan government. Some Jesuits responded to this shift by adapting their strategy for movement and concealment around the country to include widows’ houses as frequent sites of refuge. By 1593, nine Jesuit priests were in England after the first wave of the English Mission began in 1580. Of those nine, five frequently used the houses of widows for Jesuit meetings and for harboring: John Gerard, Henry Garnet, William Weston, Robert Southwell, and Edward Oldcorne. In the early 1580s, these priests relied on invented identities and connections with male gentry households for concealment. Jesuit priest John Gerard himself acknowledged that his first method of concealment was using gentlemen’s clothing. In his autobiography, compiled from memoirs written after his escape from England to the Spanish Netherlands in 1606, he wrote, “Apart from being able to move in their society more freely and safely now, and with greater authority, I could stay longer and more securely in any house or noble home where my host might bring me as his friend or acquaintance.” Introductions as a friend of a gentleman worked for a time, however, once the charge for aiding a Jesuit priest escalated to treason in 1583, it became unsafe for priests to maneuver in public and more dangerous for those who entertained priests within their houses. After 1583, Catholics who participated in priest harboring knew that

they were actively engaging in a dangerous underground mission.\textsuperscript{297} In the summer of 1589, John Gerard commented, “The way I had gone about in public had advantages in the beginning, but it could not continue forever.”\textsuperscript{298} The strategy, at least for John Gerard, of moving about England shifted from an open relationship with gentry families to secret maneuvers between households. A 1591 letter from John Cecil, an imprisoned Catholic and priest, to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, suggests that Gerard’s experience was evidence of a larger pattern amidst the Catholic gentry.\textsuperscript{299} John Cecil, alias Snowden, wrote that he found “by experience, that all Catholics of credit have sequestered themselves, and shut their doors and purses from all young priests and practitioners, so that were he to remain in England, he would have work enough for two or three months to procure a hole to hide his head in.”\textsuperscript{300} While this concession could have been a decoy to suggest that Catholics no longer posed much of a threat, the timing does correspond nicely with Gerard’s perceived shift in strategy.

Indeed, the case of the Jesuit John Gerard allows us to glimpse some of the roles that widows played within this shift in the Catholic mission. Gerard landed in England in November of 1588. By the summer of 1589, Gerard recognized that he had to move about in a more secretive fashion than he had during his first year in England, due to the rising tensions towards Catholics and the fact that he was becoming recognizable in his community as a Jesuit priest.\textsuperscript{301} From the summer of 1589 to his arrest in the spring of 1594, Gerard stayed in four Catholic households, three of which were either managed or co-managed by Catholic widows. The first household was in the county of Suffolk and co-owned by Henry Drury of Lawshall and his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{297} Elliot Rose, \textit{Cases of Conscience: Alternatives Open to Recusants and Puritans under Elizabeth I and James I} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 224.
  \item \textsuperscript{298} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 28.
  \item \textsuperscript{299} There is no known relation between John Cecil and William Cecil.
  \item \textsuperscript{300} \textit{J. Snowden to Cecil}, June 20, 1591, at the National Archives, London, SP 13/e. f.001.
  \item \textsuperscript{301} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 28.
\end{itemize}
widowed mother, an example of the variety of housing arrangements reached following the death of a woman’s husband. Gerard stayed at Lawshall for two years while Drury joined the Society of Jesus and his widowed mother managed the household and made vestments for household services.\textsuperscript{302} The second household was located in London and maintained by Anne Howard.\textsuperscript{303} Gerard writes, “We then had few friends in a position to help us. Father Southwell alone had a great benefactress, [Anne, Countess of Arundel] and while we had him with us, he was able with her help to maintain himself and some other priests as well as keep a private house where he usually received the Superior on his visits to London.”\textsuperscript{304} William Wiseman and his wife Jane Huddleston managed the third household, Braddocks in the county of Essex, where Gerard became the family chaplain in 1591.\textsuperscript{305} While a widow did not manage Braddocks during Gerard’s movements from 1589 to 1594, Gerard’s stay with the Wisemans still resulted in the creation of yet another Jesuit hiding place managed by a widow. William Wiseman’s widowed mother Jane Wiseman also lived with the family at Braddocks, and it was during Gerard’s stay that he persuaded Wiseman to return to her own house at Northend and maintain her own priest. Gerard writes, “Her house was a shelter and sure stronghold for Jesuits and all priests, and when I or others visited her she welcomed us with great joy…indeed she was a true widow, given up to all good works and full of zeal.”\textsuperscript{306} Authorities eventually arrested Jane Wiseman in 1593 and sentenced her to life imprisonment, although James I granted her a royal pardon at his

\textsuperscript{302} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 29-30.
\textsuperscript{303} At this time, Howard was still married. However, her husband was imprisoned in the Tower of London for treason, thereby leaving her in charge. Once Philip Howard died, Anne Howard would continue her work for the Catholic mission as a widow.
\textsuperscript{304} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 32.
\textsuperscript{306} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 41.
accretion. Jane Wiseman’s social independence, paired with her economic ability to maintain her own dwelling, made her the ideal woman to manage a priest-harboring home.

The fourth household represents yet another shift in John Gerard’s strategy, from hiding within the households of Catholics to “self-harboring”. Gerard wrote, “I had still to learn from experience that the safest course was to have a house of my own.” When Gerard rented his own house in London 1594, he put in charge as caretaker the widow Anne Line. He writes, “When I decided to establish the house I mentioned above I could think of no better person than her to put in charge of it. She was able to manage the finances, do all the housekeeping, look after the guests, and deal with the inquiries of strangers.” After three years of harboring priests and managing the households of John Gerard, Anne Line was executed in 1601. In the most active years of John Gerard’s work, he relied heavily on widows who could both protect and serve him and his fellow priests due to the social independence and economic freedom granted to widows in early modern England.

Like Gerard, the Jesuit William Weston compiled an autobiography of his mission in England after he fled abroad. He arrived to English shores in summer of 1584 and was exiled from England in 1603. Unlike Gerard, Weston was in poor health at the time of writing after spending seventeen years in prison, four in solitary confinement. While his health may have altered his recollections, the autobiography still offers portrayals of the people he encountered

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307 Walker, “Jane Wiseman,” http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69040. Wiseman’s age and gender influenced James’ decision to grant her a pardon, revealing yet another opportunity inherent in the perceived vulnerability of widowhood, as will be discussed in chapter 3.
310 Gerard, Autobiography, 103.
during his mission. Twice, Weston recounted the importance of Mrs. Catherine Bellamy, a widow Jesuits turned to in times of dire need. He writes:

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Indeed we were in a great difficulty, for Ralph was to have been our escort, instructing us in our work and introducing us to Catholics, and it was hard to decide the best thing to do. Father Persons, however, had given me an introduction to a gentlewoman named Bellamy, of whom I shall have occasion to say more later…She had been Father Persons’ hostess, and had a large house and was wealthy. Like a stalwart Catholic, she was full of good-will towards the Father who, as I heard, had done much of his work and writing under her roof.  
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Weston turned to Catherine Bellamy for aid, because she was known among the Jesuits to be a Catholic who opened her home to them. Her wealth, religious conviction, and house all served the mission through priest harboring, and she also maintained a safe haven for the creation of Catholic writings. The second instance described in Weston’s autobiography was not his own experience, but a recollection of the capture and arrest of Anthony Babington. Babington, the primary instigator of the Babington Plot to assassinate Elizabeth I, and others fled from authorities to woods near Catherine Bellamy’s house. Babington sent a message to Bellamy requesting help, along with his personal ring in order to certify that the message was indeed from him, and Bellamy opened her home to Babington and the other gentlemen. Protestant authorities found Babington in the barn and arrested most of the group, including Babington, Catherine Bellamy, her daughters, and her two sons. One of her sons died on the rack, while Bellamy herself died while imprisoned in the Tower of London. Babington was executed for treason in 1586. While Catherine Bellamy is an example of a widow who did not survive her actions against the crown, she is yet another example of a widow who Jesuits turned to in times of need.

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Further examples of Jesuits who used widows in their mission include Henry Garnet and Edward Oldcorne, who both spent some time at Baddesley Clinton, a house in Warwickshire run by the widow Eleanor Brooksby and her sister Anne Vaux. Anne Vaux never married, and represents another type of *femme sole* in the Catholic Mission. In addition, the Jesuit Robert Southwell arrived in England in 1586 and spent much of his time in the household of Anne Dacre, Countess of Arundel in London. Dacre’s husband, Philip Howard Earl of Arundel, was in prison while Anne sheltered Southwell and other visiting Jesuits in London. Following her husband’s death in 1595, Anne continued to shelter priests. While she was not a widow during Southwell’s life, she was a widow of sorts with her husband imprisoned. In fact, her biographer remarked, “During the eleven years of her husband’s imprisonment, she had liv’d without any difficulty in manner of a Widdow.” Anne Dacre is an example of a woman who continued to use her status, goods, and properties to benefit the Catholic mission without the presence of her husband. While Southwell lived under the protection of Anne Dacre, he composed and printed *An Epistle of Comfort* on a clandestine press set up in her house. She supplied Southwell with money and lent him a house where he could shelter priests. However, in 1592 he was apprehended, tortured, and executed under the watchful eye of Richard Topcliffe, famed Elizabethan priest-hunter.

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315 Anne Howard’s activities as a widow will be examined in detail in the following chapters.
While Southwell relied on the protection of a married woman, albeit single in her efforts, he recognized the role of widows. In a letter dated 12 January 1587, Robert Southwell wrote to Claudio Acquaviva, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus:

Sed, quamvis orbae maritis viduae, dctoribus familiae, fautoribus fides et nutriciis ecclesiae maereant quodammodo et lamententur, viget tamen fides, exultat ecclesia, familiae non deficient, et virilibus animis Dei negotium vel imbelles foeminae promovere non desistunt. 319

But, although widows bereft of their husbands—[who are] the heads-of-household, supporters of the faith, and nurturers of the church—grieve to a degree and lament, the faith nonetheless is strong, the church prevails, families do not fail, and even the unwarlike women do not cease to advance the work of God with brave hearts. 320

Southwell singled out widows as influential in advancing God’s work because they overcame their grief and strengthened both the mission and their families with great courage. It is appropriate that Southwell’s greatest champion, Anne Howard, would become one such widow.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation recount examples of influential Catholic widows, such as those that served John Gerard, Henry Garnet, Edward Oldcorne, William Weston, and Robert Southwell. The widows and priests discussed above provide confirmation of a Jesuit strategy, early in the English mission, in using widows’ houses for harboring. They are evidence that the combination of wealth, autonomy, and isolation provided by widowhood led to a calculated strategy, on the part of Jesuits, to have Catholic widows as allies. This is based, in part, on both the recollections of Jesuit priests, as well as the recognition of Protestant authorities of the consistent presence of widows within Jesuit intrigue.

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320 A special thank you to Tim Griffith for assistance with my translation.
Protestant authorities and the Role of Widows

Protestant authorities began to recognize and specifically note the presence of women, and widows in particular, within the Jesuit’s mission in the 1580s, right along with the start of the mission. According to anti-Jesuit pamphlets, women were easy targets for the lecherous Jesuits, as they were assumed to be susceptible to the deceptions of the priests. In particular, widows were perceived as weak-minded. Protestant religious controversialist Sir Humphrey Lynde wrote, “the Spirit of God hath so ordered and disposed the Scriptures that…to that end no ignorant man should pretend obscurity for his excuse, it is ordained that the laborer and servant, the widow woman, and the most unlearned man, by hearing them, should reap some benefit.”

Lynde compared the widow to the ignorant and unlearned man, directly in line with the common perception of women as the weaker sex. Furthermore, women represented the depraved character of the Catholic religion. Arthur Marotti argues that Protestants viewed both women and Catholicism as intrinsically superstitious, idolatrous, and carnal. The female gender was a perfect manifestation in the flesh of the depravity of Catholicism. In his work, that focuses on anti-Catholic biases amidst a formulating English Protestant national identity, Marotti states:

The recusant woman was, like Catholicism itself (the religion of the ‘Whore of Babylon’), the target of Protestant misogyny; a masculinized, reform Christianity, which attacked not only the cult of the Virgin, but also devotion to female (as well as male) saints, associated women’s ‘carnality’ with some of the alleged corruptions of Catholicism, contrasting the devotional and sacramental practices of the Roman Church (with their reliance on the physical meditation of the spiritual) with the supposedly more spiritual orientation of Protestant text- and language-based religion.

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321 Sir Humphrey Lynde, Via devia: the by-vway mis-leading the weake and vnstable into dangerous paths of error, by colourable shewes of apocryphall scriptures, vnwritten traditions, doubtfull Fathers, ambiguous counsell, and pretended catholike Church (1630), Early English Books Online, Web, April 2014, p. 28.
Catholic women were frequently under attack from Protestant propaganda for their weakness and propensity to fall under the attack of Catholic priests. Jesuits were alleged to have abused women who trusted them, were skilled at deceiving the wider public, preyed on women’s weak minds, and enticed women into debauchery. The danger of such women was that they in turn acted as Delilah and led the men of England into peril. Jesuits were known as workmen of the “murdering” Ignatius of Loyola and seducers of the Lord’s “faithful progeny”. Seduction was a common motif in portrayals of Jesuit priests. According to Protestants, Jesuits used sex and desire to lure aid from women and took full advantage of their weak minds and susceptibility. As Church of England preacher Christopher Hooke stated in a sermon preached in 1603, “when the husband dieth, the wife hath lost her head, when the wife dieth, the husband hath lost his right hand.” A woman without a husband was lost and thereby susceptible to the influence and control of another male figure.

Jesuits were also purported to use deception and fear to prey on the weak, to the point of using ghosts or apparitions. In 1624, John Gee recounts the story of a Protestant woman named Mary Boucher who experienced such deception at the house of a certain “Lady A”. While at the house, numerous Jesuits labored to convert Boucher to Catholicism, to no avail. One evening, Mrs. [Anne] Vaux came to her room to comfort her and stroke her forehead. After she left, Boucher “heard her chamber door open, and with that a great light flashed into the room two or three times, which she thought somebody did by way of jest or merriment, to make her

324 John Hull, The unmasking of the politique atheist (1602), Early English Books Online, Web, April 2014, p. 34.
325 Christopher Hooke, A sermon preached in Paules Church in London and published for the instruction and consolation of all that are heavy hearted (1603), Early English Books Online, Web, April 2014, p. 15.
afraid.” A woman with long hair, skin pale and cold to the touch, dressed all in white approached her bed and claimed to be from Purgatory. The apparition came to tell her how she could escape the same fate. The ghost continued “for the space of an hour or two questioning with Mary Boucher, who lay in great heat and agony, sweating and quaking upon her bed.”

After the apparition left the room, Mrs. Vaux reappeared asking after Boucher. After Mary recounted the story to Vaux, Anne pushed Boucher to become a Catholic. When questioned about this event, Boucher “thinketh in her conscience some of those things could not be done without witchcraft, or some strange help by the devil.” She believed it was a plot devised by both the Jesuit priests and Mrs. Vaux.

Similarly, an anonymous pamphlet from 1610 recounts how Jesuits deceive and entice women into their circles:

Some demand of me whereto serve these habits for women?...he acquaints himself with the poorest widows, and silliest women, as poor Spinsters, or Landresses, which send their daughters to receive some Almes. When as this villan hath by his enchantments drawn them to his humor, being before tattered and torn, he attireth them in goodly apparel, which he hath in keeping, and having thus trimmed them up, he brings them to my maisters the Reverend Fathers by unknown ways...So they pass the night in feasts and dancings, when as the younger sort amongst them perceive nothing. For to this end they have vaults, yea they have secret places under ground, in imitation of those, which in old time did vow themselves to Venus.

Anti-Jesuit writings such as this cite poor, silly, and single women as common prey for the Jesuits’ schemes. Authors compare the Jesuit strategy to pagan practices, and maintain that they used witchcraft, sexual licentiousness, and deception to sway the female mind. Widows, in particular, were the more susceptible demographic due to their lack of male guardianship. This

327 Gee, Nevy shreds of the old snare, 3.
328 Gee, Nevy shreds of the old snare, 4.
329 Gee, Nevy shreds of the old snare, 8.
330 Anonymous, A discoverie of the most secret and subtile practices of the Jesuits. Translated out of French (1610) , Early English Books Online, Web, April 2014, p. 3.
inherent perceived weakness on the part of Protestants was in large part founded in scriptural portrayals of widows as helpless and meek. It is no wonder that widows were a common trope in anti-Catholic writings from Protestant authorities.

Deans, preachers and clergymen frequently compared Jesuits to the lecherous Pharisees of the New Testament within their apologies for the Church of England. Oftentimes this comparison alluded to the passage in Mark 12 where Jesus warned followers to “Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and [love] salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.” The image of Pharisees preying on the weak, most notably on widows, was a favorite reference amidst Protestant attacks against Jesuits. In 1586, Calvinist lecturer and preacher at Lincoln’s Inn, William Charke, wrote of the Jesuits, “neither are they maintained altogether by pure alms, but by an artificial kind of cousinage, under pretence of restitution; as their predecessors, the Pharisees, under pretext of long prayers, devoured the houses of poor widows.”

The connection between Jesuits and widows as discussed through this comparison with New Testament Pharisees was not only utilized as a generic trope of their debased character, but quite possibly as an indication that there was a literal infiltration of Jesuits into the houses of widows. In 1585, the Bishop of Winchester Thomas Bilson wrote concerning the Jesuits: “Let these false prophets be astonished that are courteous in shew, scorpious in sting, wolues under lambs skinnes, killing the bodies & devouring the soules of men with the sword of their mouth.

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331 Mark 12:38-40.
whose religion savoureth nothing but of traitorousness and covetousness, entering the houses of
widows, they lead women captives that be laden with sins.”\textsuperscript{333} In 1595, Church of England
clergyman and theologian Francis Bunny wrote:

It is our sin also that bringeth in among us, these that creep not into widows
houses only, but into the houses of men, especially women that are simple and
ignorant, and laden with sin, many of them withdrawing them from the true
knowledge of God, and duty towards their magistrates, I meane the Jesuits and
seminary priests, a kind of people as necessary and commodious to live among
good subjects or in any quiet commonwealth, as the frogges, lice, flies, and
grasshoppers of Egypt were…. They seem like unto women (that is) not like to do
hurt, but yet obstinate and stiffe they are, in that they take in hand, and cruel and
mightie to doe much hurt among them that receive them.\textsuperscript{334}

Both Thomas Bilson and Francis Bunny contended that Jesuits preyed on women, widows in
particular, due to their weak nature. Bunny goes one step further and states that these women
receive the priests. Further evidence of the connection between widows and Jesuits can be found
in the writings of John White, a Church of England clergyman and anti-Roman polemicist. In
1614 he wrote that the Jesuits devoured “those that entertain them”. While alluding to the Mark
12 passage, he argues that Jesuits devoured the houses of widows specifically in his discussion of
those abused by Jesuits, thereby insinuating that widows were the ones who entertained the
Jesuits. He writes:

I might well compare them [Jesuits], as I did, to ravening Harpies, and wide
gorged Idols, that under pretence of religion and persecution, seek nothing but
their backs and bellies, and the satisfying of their lust and ambition. For we
cannot but speak the things we hear and see; and we speak it not in hope to make
them ashamed. For words will not chase Harpies from the prey; but in
commiseration of our people, that suffer themselves thus to be abused, and in

\textsuperscript{333} Thomas Bilson, \textit{The true difference between Christian sujection and unchristian rebellion} (1585), \textit{Early English Books Online}, Web, April 2014, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{334} Francis Bunny, \textit{A survey of the popes supremacie wherein is a trial of his title, and a proofe of his practices.} (1595), \textit{Early English Books Online}, Web, April 2014., p. 210.
detestation of that hypocrisy, that under pretence of long prayers devour widows houses.  

Similarly, Matthew Sutcliffe, the Dean of Exeter and apologist for the Church of England wrote in 1600, “The papists also pray, and do almsdeeds: but sure they have no reason to proclaime them. For under color of their prayers, the monks and friars devour the houses of widows and orphans.”

John Boys, the dean of Canterbury, noted that Jesuits have “deluded many young gentlewomen and devoured many widows houses.” Not only does he allude to the analogy of devouring the widow’s house, but also he discusses the strategy of the Jesuits of targeting women. He continues, “And this kind of fishing they learned from Satan himself, who did first attempt the woman and then tempt the man, using the wife as a trap to catch her husband. And the reason why the devil and his agents are fishers of women rather than of men, is because they be less able to resist.”

Not only was there the scriptural picture of devouring widows’ houses, but there was a perceptible strategy, by the Jesuits, to target women. John Hoskins, a Church of England clergyman wrote, “Priests and Jesuits, who, like the two Neopolitane thieves, *Pater noster and Ave Marie*, under pretence of long prayer, devour widows houses, might tell them, that their judgment and damnation sleepeth not.”

To Protestant male authors, widows were not only an easy target, but they also provided an economic advantage for Jesuits. *Nevy shreds of the old snare*, by John Gee, features a widow who treated two priests, Mr. Fisher and Mr. Wainman, with caution, considering that “they might

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worke her out of her moneys, which being so round a summe, they laboured to get this fat Fish into their Nett.”³⁴⁰ Gee later wrote, “Shee seeing and plainly perceiving that they made Religion a stalking horse to intend their owne profit, began to take consideration thereof, and to meditate on their practicing, assuring herself that they aymed at nothing more than to cheate her of her moneys and goods.”³⁴¹ In *The Jesuites Intrigues*, an anonymous Protestant piece of propaganda against the Catholic mission, the author satirized taking advantage of widows in particular. Henry Compton, a bishop of London whose other publications indicate a strong anti-Catholic bent, translated the pamphlet from French and published it in 1669.³⁴² The pamphlet feigns authenticity as direct instructions from the Order to Jesuits in its introductory letter, which cites that the manuscript was recovered amongst the papers of a deceased Jesuit. Due to its publication by an anti-Catholic Protestant, it is more likely anti-Jesuit propaganda rather than a detailed account of Jesuit strategy.³⁴³ Whether it is a true account from a Jesuit, or a piece of propaganda, its frequent discussion of widows in the text reveals that there were traceable connections between Jesuits and widows.

At the very least, the pamphlet is an anti-Jesuit piece of propaganda written in the late-seventeenth century as a cultural memory of the relationship between widows and Jesuits. At the most, it is an account of a real and/or perceived strategy used on the part of the Jesuits to

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³⁴³ Laurence Lux Sterritt maintains that it is a literary representation of Protestant imagination, “La seduction au service de la perfidie,” 64.
capitalize on widows as agents of religious preservation. Whether it is a true account from a Jesuit, or a piece of propaganda, its frequent discussion of widows in the text reveals that there were traceable connections between the Jesuits and widows. The author wrote, “Visit the Widows, as often as we may be welcome, entertaining them with pleasing discourses, and godly stories, and keep up the cheerfulness of their humour, and never be too severe with them in Confession, lest they take distaste at us: unless there be no hopes left of making any advantage by them.”

This passage assumes a relationship between widows and Jesuits founded on deception and manipulation, a relationship of power in favor of the Jesuit that would be more difficult to maintain with a married woman under the authority and watchful eye of her husband. The pamphlet continues this gendered typecast by stating, “Above all, they must be forbid the visiting of other Orders, lest they intice them away from us. For generally, this Sex is unconstant. They must therefore be made to see, that our Order is superiour to all the rest, more necessary to the Church, of greater reputation in the Cities, and has greater interest with Princes. So that it will be impossible for them to make a better choice.”

Widows are presented as incapable of making the correct decision on their own, yet the advantages of bringing widows in the fold makes them worth the trouble of catering to their every whim. The author states, “When therefore the Widows are ready to put their Estates into our hands, and to give themselves up to the directions of their ghostly Father; to avoid clamour and opposition, they must immediately confirm this Conveyance, if they be willing, and that they are fully perswaded that such counsel

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345 Jesuites Intrigues, 41.
comes from God, the Protectour of Widows, who has greater care of their souls, than bodies.”

The author highlights an interesting dynamic between Jesuits and widows that could explain why widows feature prominently in histories of the English mission. Widows had singular control over both their money and time, yet according to the gender dynamics of a highly patriarchal society, they were presumed to need assistance with such autonomy. *Jesuites Intrigues* portrays Catholic widows as being unpredictable, easily swayed, with pliable minds and assets to be harvested for the Society’s use. In contrast, the pamphlet depicts Jesuits as clever, devious, and manipulating individuals who cater to the desires of widows for their own advantage.

The relationship between widows and Jesuits is further evidenced by the titles of chapters six and seven of the pamphlet, “How to procure the friendship of rich widows” and “How to keep Widows to ourselves, so far as concerns the disposing of their Estates”, respectively. The use of widows as part of their strategy is obvious. The author writes in chapter six:

> For this purpose must be called out some of the Fathers of the liveliest fresh complexions, and of a middle age. These must frequent their [widows] houses, and if they find a kindness towards our Society, impart to them its great worth. If they come to our Churches, we must put a Confessour to them, that shal perswade them to continue in their Widowhood, representing to them the great pleasure, delight and advantage will accrue to them by remaining in that state: and this they must be assured of, and promised an eternal reward, and that this only thing will exempt them from Purgatory…

According to this passage, the Protestant author charged Jesuits with instructing and encouraging a continued state of widowhood, in order to ensure full devotion of a widow to the Catholic cause and their Jesuit priest. The chapter continues, “Set them up a little Chapel, and an Altar neatly furnished, the minding of which may put the thoughts of a Husband out of their heads... Twice or thrice a week must be given them a Lecture in commendation of a Widows life, and

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346 *Jesuites Intrigues*, 40.
347 *The Jesuites Intrigues*, 35.
how many thousand vexations and charges a second Marriage incurs.” Remarriage came with the possibility of a widow’s loyalty turning elsewhere. Continued widowhood ensured a continued need to lean on a “ghostly father” for guidance. The chapter states,

To facilitate the business they must be induced to lessen their family, and to take Stewards, and other Officers of our recommendation, and place some of our Creatures about them in the House. So that by degrees, having got a perfect knowledge of all the circumstances of their Concerns, and their devotion to our Society, we may at last place what Officers we please about them. The first thing that their Confessours are to do, is to get into their Counsels, and to let them understand how necessary it is for the good of their souls to give themselves wholly up into their hands.  

Not only does this tract purport that Jesuits encouraged widows to remain unmarried, but they assumed control of the persons operating within the household. Furthermore, they worked to ensure that monetary gain would result from their relationships with these women. Chapter seven of *The Jesuit Intrigues* considers the economic opportunities inherent in a relationship with single women in charge of their deceased husbands’ estates. The wealthy were obvious targets, and a wealthy widow was an important boon. The author writes:

We must visit the Nobility and rich Widows, and sift out with a Christian address, whether they will leave any thing to our Churches, as well to get remission of their own sins, as those of their Relations and Friends…

When we have got good store of money and other things out of our Widows, for fear they should take a freak to marry again, we must put discreet Confessours to them, who will take care that they assign us pensions, and certain tributes, or alms, to help pay the yearly debts contracted by our Colleges, and professed Houses, particularly for those at *Rome*...

Before a Widow comes to die, if she has not left us to be Executors, for fear of displeasing her friends, want of affection, or any other cause, let her be acquainted with our poverty, the number of our new Colleges not as yet endowed, the zeal and numerousness of our Order, the great want our Churches are in, and advise

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348 *The Jesuites Intrigues*, 36.
349 *The Jesuites Intrigues*, 36.
350 *The Jesuites Intrigues*, 45.
351 *The Jesuites Intrigues*, 41.
her to finish those buildings of our Colleges which are left imperfect, and to be at the charge herself, for the greater glory of God…\textsuperscript{352}

According to \textit{The Jesuit Intrigues}, whether from the mouths of Jesuits or Protestants, widows featured prominently in the Jesuit strategy in the English mission. While the document is more than likely Protestant propaganda relating how Jesuits preyed on single women, it still suggests that they chose widows for the reason to gain access and use of their houses, gain and exploit their loyalty and wealth, and encourage them to remain chaste so as to not chance their loyalty extending elsewhere. Whether widows’ transfer of property and money from a husband to a priest who victimized widows’ vulnerability in a patriarchal society or not, the fact is that widows had assets that were highly useful in the act of harboring priests. When comparing the content of \textit{Jesuites Intrigues} with the real, pragmatic choices of Jesuits such as John Gerard in terms of their use of widows’ houses, there appears to be some justification in the satirized relationship between Jesuits and widows.\textsuperscript{353}

In discussing the threat of the Jesuits and the threat of Catholics to the Protestant realm, each of these male Protestant authors highlight a connection between Jesuit priests and widows. The Jesuit assumed a predatory role while the widow became weak and unwilling prey and thereby acted as a catalyst for further corruption. Whether these invocations of the relationship between widows and priests are rhetorical or real, the presence of widows in Catholic survival is undeniable. Modern historians have overlooked the extent to which widowhood influenced opportunities to participate in Catholic survival, and the ways religious minorities facing increased pressure from government officials could use gender stereotypes to their advantage.

\textsuperscript{352} \textit{The Jesuites Intrigues}, 41.

\textsuperscript{353} An argument maintained in Lux Sterritt, “La seduction au service de la perfidie,” 64.
Conclusion

This chapter suggests that both Jesuit priests and Protestant authorities recognized the possibilities for Catholic subversion within widows’ social and economic situation. In addition, the disadvantages of widowhood in terms of cultural vulnerability and obscurity became advantages in the process of Catholic survival in post-Reformation England. The unique opportunities inherent in widowhood, outlined in this chapter, tangibly manifested in the form of the household – a space bequeathed through a husband’s will, controlled and maintained by the widow, isolated from male hierarchy, and dedicated for Catholic use. It is in and around widows’ houses that this dissertation will now turn. The widow’s house was where the legal ambiguity of the Catholic widow, the cultural isolation through stereotypes, the possibilities for economic autonomy, and religious conscience all merged to create a space ripe for Catholic survival efforts. While wealth, age, and relationship with the crown had a significant impact on the abilities of a widow to act subversively, the remaining chapters show that many widows were historical actors in the Catholic mission, not just mere assistants or nameless hosts.354

The purposeful and aggressive stance these women took towards aiding priests is best depicted in the words of an English Catholic widow herself. An anonymous letter attributed to Lady Mary Lovell (1564-1628), the founder of the English Carmelite convent in Antwerp and widow of Sir Robert Lovell, attacked the words of Sir Edward Hoby, author of the pamphlet ‘To all Romish Collapsed Laides, of Great Britanie’. Hoby equated Catholic re-conversion in

354 Oftentimes the husband’s previous relationship with Elizabeth I had a direct impact on his widow’s treatment following his death. For example, Anne Howard, Countess of Arundel’s husband Philip Howard died in the Tower of London, imprisoned for treason. Howard lost almost everything to the crown in the aftermath, yet she continued to help the Catholic cause as a widow. On the other hand, Lady Magdalen Montague’s husband was a great friend of Elizabeth I, and after his death, Magdalen was treated graciously, even though she was a known Catholic. The importance of maintaining a non-threatening relationship with the crown will be discussed in chapter 4.
England “with feminine weakness and extravagance.”\textsuperscript{355} Lovell retorts in her anonymous letter written abroad:

If therefore we be defamed by such as you for harbouring of them [priests], we hold it noe disgrace and if for this cause, we buy the quiet of our consciences (which you in your frencie call a fanaticall humour) at a high rate for the losses we sustaine, our sourles were bought at a higher price, and it will cost us more deare if we loose them.\textsuperscript{356}

The exchange of worldly loss for eternal gain was reason enough for many widows to engage in treason. The remaining chapters of this dissertation will recount the lives and actions of more than sixty widows who made the choice to participate in the Catholic mission. While widows were most often associated with pictures of vulnerability and in need of care, the next chapter will bridge perception with reality, and ascertain how views of widows as vulnerable influenced the treatment and prosecution of widows in the act of harboring priests.

While extant early modern English sources provide three depictions of widowhood – vulnerable, chaste, and lusty – evidence in the remaining three chapters suggests a need for a fourth type: the active widow. The widows in this study utilized and manipulated the legal, social, cultural, and economic frameworks within which they lived, worked, and socialized to their advantage. Such “active” widows did more than remain pious in a prayer closet. They harbored priests, opened their houses for Mass, sent children to convents and seminaries abroad, and patronized Catholic organizations – all actions deemed treasonous to Elizabethan penal laws. For such women, widowhood presented more than a marital status. Instead, these women used a unique set of social frameworks to promote a higher degree of autonomy in both time and resources than other women in early modern England.

\textsuperscript{355} Arnold Hunt, “The Lady is a Catholic: Lady Lovell’s reply to Sir Edward Hoby,” \textit{Recusant History} 31, 3 (2013): 421. Hunt maintains that the anonymous letter was written by Lady Lovell. \textsuperscript{356} \textit{A copie of a letter written by a Catholique lady to Syr Edward Hoby} at Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 447, folio 412.
CHAPTER THREE:

PROTECTING CATHOLICISM: WIDOWS, PRIESTS, AND BOUNDARIES OF SECLUSION

The way I had gone about in public had advantages in the beginning, but it could not continue forever, since the danger of recognition grew as I came to know more people.

- John Gerard, The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest\(^{357}\)

The arrival of seminary priests to English shores in the late 1570s, followed by the Jesuits in the 1580s, necessitated the creation of hiding places in Catholic houses to protect both the people and items made illegal under Elizabethan penal laws. Priest holes emerged in rudimentary forms in the 1580s and experienced a surge following the 1585 ‘Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests and Such Other like Disobedient Persons’, which made it treason to shelter priests.\(^{358}\) Either adapted from natural gaps in existing architecture, or cleverly designed and created in new construction, these hides harbored priests throughout England between floors, within fireplaces, amidst roof rafters, and between walls.

Priest holes, Protestant spies, priest hunters, Catholic underground networks, and popish plots hatched behind closed doors have been the study of fiction and non-fiction for decades. For more than a century, historians have studied the intricacies, ingenuity, and mystery surrounding Elizabethan and early Stuart priest hides. Allan Fea’s Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places (1901) and Rooms of Mystery and Romance (1931), together with Granville Squiers’ Secret

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\(^{358}\) This surge in the construction of priest holes was primarily the work of Nicholas Owen, nicknamed “Little John” – the chief architect of priest holes in Elizabethan England. Nicholas Owen traveled with the Jesuit Henry Garnet for eighteen years constructing hides in various Catholic houses throughout England. Outside of Catholic sources, it is difficult to piece together how many hides Owen built. Michael Hodgetts attributes most constructed hides to Owen. He maintains that most known priest-holes were created in the 1590s and the first decade of the 1600s, which corresponds with the dates of Owen’s activity until his execution in 1606. Michael Hodgetts, “Elizabethan Priest-Holes I: Dating and Chronology,” Recusant History 11 (1972): 292.
Hiding Places (1933) describe more than 360 hides in Great Britain, complete with the ghost stories and legends that accompanied the post-Reformation use of these hides. Michael Hodgetts’ work has departed from myth to create a more systematic and categorical study. His series of five articles on Elizabethan priest-holes in Recusant History from 1972 to 1975 contributed to the publication of his own Secret Hiding-Places in 1989. Hodgetts also created three topographical indexes of priest hides (1982, 1998, and 2005), all published in Recusant History.

Michael Hodgetts’ research on the dating and chronology of priest holes, combined with his vivid descriptions of the hides, focus on the makeup and construction of the physical aspect of priest harboring. Other histories of the post-Reformation Catholic community have focused more on the people involved in creating and using priest holes; the harborers and those harbored. Some provide regional analyses, such as Hugh Aveling for Yorkshire, Roger Manning for Sussex, and Christopher Haigh for Lancashire. Others focus on groups of people or families in particular, such as Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe’s argument for the paramount role of the laity.

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in maintaining and spreading Catholicism throughout England.\textsuperscript{363} Godfrey Anstruther’s work on the Vaux family centers on the exploits of a single family, as does Michael Questier’s study of the Brownes of Sussex.\textsuperscript{364} In the past few decades, historians have examined the active role of women in such clandestine actions, particularly since the act of harboring priests was generally conducted in the private house, a distinctly feminine sphere.\textsuperscript{365} As discussed in chapter one, the prevailing historiography of female agency in the English Catholic community focused on wives’ control of the household, their tenacity and religious zeal, and the loophole legislation provided through the coverture of their husbands. However, as explained earlier, the majority of examples in each study of female harborers involved widows. This chapter reexamines the history of priest harboring to offer a new perspective, one that seeks to eliminate the homogenization of female agency. By exposing the prominence of widows as harborers, this


chapter suggests that marital status had a significant impact on the protection provided by a Catholic household.

The arguments of chapters one and two regarding the broad framework and perceptions associated with widowhood in English culture, law, and society, bridge in this chapter with the experience of more than thirty Catholic widows who harbored priests in post-Reformation England. The unique legal ambiguity associated with women devoid of male authority, the economic autonomy and independence of resources and time available to some at the death of their husbands, along with the dichotomous stereotypes of vulnerability and unnatural power inherent in such autonomy reveal the substantial advantages of widowhood to the preservation of the Catholic faith, unavailable to other women and men. This chapter argues that the contemporary legal, economic, and cultural structures surrounding widowhood created physical and psychological barriers between widows’ households and Protestant authorities – unique additional layers of privacy in the act of priest harboring, specific to widows’ gender and marital status. The legal ambiguity, economic independence, and perception of widows as vulnerable outsiders influenced the perception and therefore the suspicion of widows’ houses as centers of harboring. The focus of this chapter is not the ingenuity of priest hides themselves, the layout of the spaces, or the “bricks and mortar” of a specific place.\footnote{Ralph Kingston, “Mind over Matter? History and the Spatial Turn,” \textit{Cultural and Social History} 7, no. 1 (2010): 114. This chapter benefits from the work of Henri Lefebvre and his conception of space as a dynamic, socially constructed entity. See \textit{The Production of a Space}, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 73.} Instead, it is the meaning attributed to this space by Protestant officials, by Jesuit priests, and by widows themselves, and the ways that meaning helped or hindered the act of harboring priests. Patriarchal frameworks, for better and worse, shaped widows’ agency through their households.
This chapter’s aim is twofold, thus, the following analysis is divided into two sections. First, it presents how the social structures of widowhood influenced widows’ ability to create and adapt the physical construction of households for harboring priests. This section examines the creation of space within households for harboring and the use of dower houses specifically for harboring priests. Opportunities to create and adapt physical space were contingent on widows’ independence in time and resources. The second aim, and section of the chapter, departs from discussions of physical space and moves towards an understanding of psychological barriers. The “psychological barriers” examined in this chapter are fashioned by the cultural perceptions and stereotypes of widows, both amidst Protestant authorities and priests, which created an added coverture over space. Gendered views of women in general, combined with views of widows as vulnerable and unthreatening, created a psychological barrier between widows’ households and Protestant searchers, magistrates, the Privy Council, and even Elizabeth I herself. Thus, widowhood created a dual veil, both physical and psychological, from the harshest penalty of Elizabethan penal laws. In this way, this chapter seeks to understand how perceptions and meanings attributed to space influenced the interactions of people within it.

Spatial histories are more than analyses of the material world or geography. They examine the value and meaning attributed to a specific place by the people who interacted within it. Ralph Kingston writes, “Human beings, we argue, interact through space, and only secondarily in space.” Such an approach serves as a connection to the “where” in history, and not a sole focus on the “what, how, who, and why”. For example, Peter Davidson’s study of

367 As houses separate from the main house of an estate, dower houses – reserved for the dowager – present a unique opportunity for clandestine actions.
368 Ralph Kingston, “Mind over Matter?” 114. Italics are Kingston’s emphasis.
369 Kingston, “Mind over Matter?” 116. Histories of space also challenge nationalistic narratives by providing a more global interpretation of history. Space does not adhere to political boundaries, thus, by viewing space the way
Catholic households argued that the materials and structures of households and chapels could articulate beliefs, loyalty to a cause, and resistance to Protestant nationalism.\(^{370}\) Frances Dolan and Lisa McClain have argued that households were an adaptable and fluid space, able to function as centers of refuge at the same time as acting as hubs of Catholic activity.\(^{371}\) This chapter, and indeed this dissertation, benefits from such studies of symbols and spatial metaphors, since its focus is on how external factors – social, cultural, economic, legal – attributed meaning to space and how widows manipulated such frameworks to create layers of privacy for clandestine actions. Since this perspective examines the relationship between the privacy of the household and the individuals desirous to breach this privacy – searchers, magistrates, sheriffs, etc. – this chapter evokes the analytical framework of boundaries, both physical and socially constructed, in its evaluation of the impact of widowhood on priest harboring.\(^{372}\) Histories of coexistence have most recently brought the notion of socially constructed boundaries to the forefront of early modern European history as a way to understand actions and interactions between conflicting groups. Such works propose that boundaries were permeable and negotiated by diverse communities to encourage religious pluralism. For contemporary individuals might have perceived it, the spatial turn allows for the merging and intersection of national, regional, and local histories.


\(^{371}\) Frances E. Dolan, “Gender and the ‘Lost’ Spaces of Catholicism,” Journal of Interdisciplinary Study 34 (2002): 641-65. The study of household space in England is not confined to the study of religious deviance. Other works have studied the use of interior decoration as allusions to an individual’s life and status. In Sarah French, “A Widow Building in Elizabethan England: Bess of Hardwick at Hardwick Hall” in Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe, ed. Allison Levy (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), French examines the interior décor of Bess of Hardwick. French maintains that Bess of Hardwick purposefully used decorative schemes to portray herself as a virtuous widow with clear references to virtuous women, and the virtues of justice, mercy, and charity. Such allusions contradicted the fact that Bess was usurping her traditional gendered social role in society by managing and funding major building projects. She portrayed herself as a virtuous widow while challenging patriarchal society, 175.

\(^{372}\) Laura Gowing argues that the boundaries afforded to the household were particularly “laden with ideological and political implications.” Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22.
example, Jesse Spohnholz examined socially constructed boundaries amidst early modern Netherlanders to expose how people managed coexistence amidst religious differences. 373 For Spohnholz, and for Christine Kooi’s work on the coexistence of Calvinists and Catholics in Holland, diverse religious groups created socially constructed boundaries to facilitate religious coexistence. 374 This dissertation departs from such notions of permeable boundaries and suggests that some religious minorities erected boundaries, both physical and psychological, to create greater privacy and protection, not porous lines of plurality. In addition, this study adds a gendered dimension to notions of ‘private space’ in a way that added a greater degree of protection from outsiders. For priest harborers in post-Reformation England, the physical boundaries of walls, priest holes, thresholds, and secluded locations, together with culturally constructed psychological boundaries of timidity and fear on the part of pursuivants to assault widows’ houses, were meant to protect and isolate.

Priest harboring was an act that depended on secrecy, loyalty, and the availability of a certain type of space that could hide full-grown men, should priest hunters come calling. Thus, the privacy afforded by households and the women who operated such spaces have been on the forefront of scholarship for the past few decades. Laurence Lux-Sterritt recently argued, “Wealthy women offered the mission a level of safety which was not to be enjoyed with male harborers. They gave priests access to their considerable resources, whilst often escaping the full brunt of the penal laws; moreover, they used gendered prejudices to their advantage, playing

upon the trope of the harmless female the better to evade investigation.”

This dissertation compliments and challenges such analyses that focus on the agency of women. It strengthens the argument that gendered stereotypes and legal ambiguity directly contributed to women’s agency, however, it suggests that considerations of female agency should consider marital status and not assume all women were wives. Lux-Sterritt continues, “English missionaries formed frequent alliances with married women and mothers…priests would gain undeniable advantages from alliances with housewives.” Yet again, as in previous works over the last few decades, scholars have pushed wives to the foreground as main actors in priest harboring. However, as typical with the histories discussed in chapter one, the actual women featured in Lux-Sterritt’s analysis are mostly widows, not wives. Of the eight women examined in detail, only one woman was a wife when she was most active in the Catholic mission. One never married, and six were widows.

The fact that seventy-five percent of the women examined by Lux-Sterritt were widows when they were most actively harboring priests makes sense when considering her initial argument, that resources, gendered prejudices, and legal ambiguity were convenient covers for subversive action. Wealthy widows had more resources and independence than married women, even deeper gendered stereotypes than married women who fell neatly into patriarchal expectations for women, and were overlooked by the legislative strategy. While wives were part of this narrative of harboring, widows feature more prominently for reasons specific to their marital status, thereby requiring that marital status be an avenue of analysis when examining

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female agency. Before examining the unique opportunities inherent in widowhood, it is beneficial to understand the significant presence of widows in priest harboring. One way to quantify the role of widows is through records of imprisonment, torture, and execution. Such sources detail the various locations authorities apprehended priests, thereby allowing for an analysis of the prominence of widows in the act of harboring priests. Granted, this source base only examines priests who were executed, and therefore only references widows who failed to successfully harbor priests. While this clearly omits individuals who successfully hid from Protestant authorities, and therefore does not provide a full representation of the English mission, it does show the occurrence of widows and the significance of their presence in the Catholic mission.

Richard Challoner’s *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, published in 1839, offers the most in-depth analysis of the hundreds of Catholic men and women, clerical and lay, executed from 1577 to 1684. During the reign of Elizabeth I alone, Challoner recounts the execution of just over 120 Jesuit and seminary priests. Using diaries, state papers, and a variety of early modern and modern printed works, Challoner details the specifics of the apprehension of 56 of those priests. From these, authorities apprehended 20 priests in houses of active priest-harborers. Widows harbored thirty-percent (6) of priests captured in private houses. What is more, of the six Jesuits executed during the reign of Elizabeth I, widows feature in three of the accounts. The widow of Sir John Arundell was harboring John Cornelius at his time of capture. While

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379 Twenty-two priests were apprehended in public, such as on the road, while performing duties (Mass, baptisms, etc.), or while staying in an inn. Six priests were apprehended through the betrayal of a spy or “fallen priest”, and eight were captured after landing on English shores, due to storms or in-the-know Protestant authorities lying in wait.
authorities apprehended Robert Southwell in the house of a man, his previous refuge was at the house of the widow Dame Cecily Stonor. Authorities apprehended Francis Page on the road and afterwards he confessed that his last hiding place had been in the house of the widow Anne Line. Of the remaining three accounts, authorities found Edmund Campion in one Mr. Yates’ house; the Jesuit Henry Walpol never made it past the shoreline before apprehension, and the details of Roger Filcock’s capture are unknown. Put another way, of the four Jesuits with detailed accounts of their location of capture, widows feature in 75%. Considering that widows made up less than nine percent of the population at a given time, their greater presence in accounts of priest apprehensions suggests a significant role in harboring.\(^{380}\) It is not the intention of this chapter to argue that widows were the most successful or prominent priest harborers. Instead, this chapter will show that widowhood provided unique opportunities for effectively harboring priests, which has been under-represented in the heretofore presentation of priest harboring.

**Physical Boundaries: The Creation and Adaptation of Domestic Space**

Widowhood provided a unique degree of economic and social autonomy, which some widows used to create and adapt houses and rooms for the purpose of priest harboring – a tangible, physical benefit both gender and marital status afforded to widows. As discussed in chapter two, a number of widows received both money and property following the death of their husbands. While this was not a universal guarantee, it was a condition specific to widowhood, which was particularly an advantage to Catholic widows who harbored priests within the confines of their house. With this financial independence came a greater degree of autonomy to use and transform domestic space. For example, Bess of Hardwick, widow of George Talbot the sixth earl of Shrewsbury, completed construction of three major country houses, including

Hardwick Hall, and a reconstruction of Chatsworth in Derbyshire. She was also a patron of a number of other building projects in the county. Sarah French maintains that Bess surpassed the limited options afforded a woman in early modern England because of her status as a widow. Widowhood, together with her social status, gave Bess of Hardwick the unique position to be an architectural patron due to her freedom from financial woes and the constraints of marital life.  

While Bess of Hardwick is an extreme example of female autonomy, she is indicative of a pattern of behavior and opportunity present in widowhood. Numerous widows utilized their newfound economic and spatial independence to either use their house to harbor priests, or even change the space to better accommodate priest hides. Through this unique autonomy, a number of widows commissioned priest holes, built new houses, and improved old edifices, thereby creating physical barriers against Protestant authorities. Consider the exploits of Dorothy Lawson in Newcastle. On March 10, 1597, Dorothy Constable married the lawyer Roger Lawson, esquire, the Protestant son and heir to Ralph Lawson of Brough Hall. His estate was worth 3000 pounds a year, thereby ensuring Dorothy Lawson with a comfortable life in the north of England. Her seventeen-year marriage to Roger Lawson ended with his death in 1614 due to sickness. Left with fifteen children and her house at Heaton, Lawson became a widow with inherited property. According to ecclesiastical law and recent studies of wills, Dorothy Lawson’s control over her husband’s estate and her subsequent ability to build an additional house in Newcastle on the Tyne was not an unusual occurrence in early modern England – in fact, it was typical for a wealthy widow. From Palmes’ account of Lawson’s life, it is unclear if

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383 The number of children varies in sources, listing anywhere between twelve and nineteen. Fifteen is the number most commonly accepted. See Sister Damien, “These be but women,” 378.
her husband bequeathed his property to her or if she acquired it through intestate inheritance. However, what is known is that following the death of Roger Lawson in London, Dorothy Lawson returned home to Heaton and remained there with her children from 1614 to 1623. In 1623, Palmes remarked that Lawson’s father-in-law, Sir Ralph Lawson, wanted to sell Heaton, but he was unable to do so without Dorothy Lawson’s permission. Eventually, Lawson granted permission and she moved to Newcastle-on-Tyne where she had the means to build a new house.384 Lawson lived at St. Antony’s for fifteen years until her death on March 26, 1632 at the age of 52.385

The location and use of St. Antony’s was arguably Dorothy Lawson’s greatest contribution to the preservation of Catholicism in Newcastle. The house was relatively secluded, and sat on the banks of the Tyne River, which provided easy access to merchants and missionaries from the continent. She had “Jesus” written in large letters on the end of the house that faced the water, so mariners and missionaries would know that hers was a house where Catholics could gather in privacy.386 While authorities could not reasonably punish Lawson for posting Jesus’ name, the sign could have signaled the presence of the Society of Jesus at the house, a sort of dual-meaning protection while proclaiming the location of a Catholic refuge. Due to its secluded yet accessible location, Jesuits frequently used Lawson’s house as a meeting place. Palmes writes that once a year, members of the Society of Jesus met for eight days to

384 Palmes, *Life of Dorothy Lawson*, 29. At this point in her life, Lawson was in financial difficulties after paying off her husband’s debt. Palmes is not explicit about what the debt was, how Dorothy was able to pay it, or more importantly, how Dorothy was able to pay for a new house at St. Anthony’s.
385 Damien, “These Be But Women”, 391.
discuss the mission in England. One thing Lawson could offer the Catholic cause was her house, and due to the economic and social autonomy afforded her by her inheritance, Lawson created a new space prime for maintaining priests. Dorothy Lawson’s use of the house as a space of dissent was not unique to her situation. Lawson was one of many solitary women who capitalized on their newfound autonomy in the eyes of society and law, and used domestic space to their religious advantage.

The financial resources some widows accumulated following the death of their husbands, through inheritance or guardianship over minor male children’s estates, made it possible for some Catholic widows to create or manipulate space in an autonomous manner different from married women. In 1600, Elizabeth Vaux, the widow of George Vaux and sister-in-law to the harboring female duo Anne Vaux and the widow Eleanor Brooksby, had a new three-story addition built at Harrowden Hall for the use of priests John Percy and John Gerard. Harrowden became a sort of “Mission Headquarters”, used as both a Catholic school and meeting place for Jesuit priests, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Vaux commissioned Nicholas Owen to build a priest hole in the original building, further solidifying Harrowden as a hub of Catholic activity. However, the final creation and adaptation of Harrowden as a Catholic refuge came on the heels of numerous moves and maneuvers by Elizabeth Vaux, each one contingent on her economic and social status as a widow.

Once her husband died, Elizabeth vowed to remain a widow and devoted her material wealth to the Catholic cause. The family suffered crippling fines due to their faith, and much of their property and income had gone to the state, yet Vaux was still able to manage financially.

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387 Palmes, *Life of Dorothy Lawson*, 47.
Her dwelling upon widowhood was at Irthlingborough, the house of her father-in-law. Jesuit John Gerard remarked that the house was poorly appointed and unsuited for their plans to create a Catholic center. Harrowden, also a family seat, sat three miles from Irthlingborough, although at this point it was also in bad shape. Gerard described Elizabeth’s motivations and aspirations for a Catholic house in his *Autobiography* and in doing so, provides a set of expectations and requirements for such a building. He maintained:

[Harrowden] had been neglected, and in many parts it was quite dilapidated, almost in fact a ruin. Certainly it was no place where she could give hospitality, as she intended, to all the Catholic gentlemen who would come to see me for spiritual comfort and consolation, for these were the only guests she wanted. Moreover, it was ill-suited for defense against the sudden incursions and raids of the pursuivants, and consequently, she would never be as free as she wished to be. What she desired, in fact, was a house where life could go on in as nearly the same way as in our colleges, and this she achieved in the end.  

A Catholic hub required seclusion and protection, away from prying eyes and the arm of the law. It needed to be well appointed, so that it could receive numerous visitors in an appropriate fashion. The house also needed to be large enough to accommodate numerous priests and provide ample space to perform necessary worship and instruction. Thus, location, size, and level of privacy were vital characteristics for a successful Catholic house.

Elizabeth Vaux tried to rent such a house in London, although her proximity to the Privy Council and the lack of privacy afforded in the city drove Vaux to the countryside. Gerard wrote, “A house in or near London, of course, had the great advantage that it would be much better placed for apostolic work, but, on the other hand, London was too dangerous for me at the moment. In any case, she would have no privacy there, and it would be unsafe for her.”

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391 Elizabeth Vaux was sister-in-law to Eleanor Brooksby and Anne Vaux, as she married their half-brother, George (d. 1594). George was the son of William Vaux by his second wife, Mary Tresham.  
appears that accessibility was deemed important for the spread and strengthening of Catholicism, but not as vital as the protection afforded by a secluded location. Elizabeth Vaux’s public interactions with officials and bailiffs as the manager of her minor son’s estate meant that Vaux had to remain accessible and visible. Unlike the widow Anne Line, who Gerard commissioned to maintain a secret household in London, Elizabeth Vaux could not disappear into the city under cover of a pseudonym. While she needed to remain in the public eye, she also needed to be cautious. As a known Catholic, she was under careful watch by the Lords of the Council.

While a country location for Vaux lessened accessibility for other Catholics, it did provide the necessary protection required for priest harboring. Gerard wrote, “We searched everywhere for the perfect house, looking over many in this county, but they all had some feature that made them not quite suitable for our purpose.”

The time and care Vaux took in choosing a house reveals the importance of both location and structure. Vaux’s social autonomy and economic independence meant she had both the time and resources to find a house that met her needs. Eventually Vaux chose Kirby Hall, a large house in Northamptonshire that “stood remote from other dwellings, surrounded by fine orchards and gardens – people could come and go without anyone noticing them.” Privacy in movement took precedence over ease of movement. Elizabeth Vaux enlisted the help of Thomas Mulsho, one of the trustees for her son, to rent Kirby Hall in his name in April 1599. With a payment of £1,500, Vaux began altering the building to better suit her needs, which included contacting Nicholas Owen to build priest holes so that she could better harbor priests. However, loose-lipped servants and a wary local community ensured that Vaux’s stay at Kirby Hall was short lived. Gerard stated, “Already there was talk in the

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393 Gerard, Autobiography, 186.
whole county that she had taken this splendid mansion because it was a remote place where she could entertain priests freely and in large numbers. This gossip had some foundation. As a result, in July 1599, authorities unsuccessfully searched the house while Nicholas Owen was there. While Owen escaped capture, and Vaux avoided prosecution, Kirby Hall was no longer a safe refuge since it was situated in a county where numerous justices and residents were Puritans eager to push Vaux from Kirby.

Kirby Hall had met the desired requirements for a Catholic house. It was private, secluded, protected, and large enough to accommodate and hide numerous priests. However, the house was situated in a hostile community. Gerard wrote, “Though they frustrated the move, she did not give up her purpose, and started at once to adapt her present house [Harrowden].” Elizabeth Vaux had a new three-storey wing built at Harrowden to provide ample privacy; so much that Gerard boasted that they could step out into a private garden and take walks in nearby fields without observation. The house became a center of operations, housed numerous Jesuits, provided an education for Catholic boys, and kept an elaborate altar and vestments for Mass. In November 1605, a letter incriminated Vaux in the Gunpowder Plot, which led to a brief arrest. In April 1606, Vaux was able to return to Harrowden until another arrest in 1616, which resulted in crippling fines and the eventual abandonment of Harrowden.

The private location of a house emerges as a pattern between Dorothy Lawson’s St. Antony’s, which sat around the bend of a river, and Elizabeth Vaux’s secluded Harrowden. Carlton Towers in Yorkshire was yet another Catholic house with expansive property outside of

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396 Anstruther, Vaux of Harrowden, 243.
397 Gerard, Autobiography, 201.
398 Anstruther, Vaux of Harrowden, 243.
399 Connelly, Women of the Catholic Resistance, 173-75.
a local village, which provided added security. The house contains a priest hole thought to be commissioned by Elizabeth Stapleton, the widow of Brian Stapleton (d. 1606), in 1614 during a remodel of the house. Unfortunately, the only surviving evidence for Elizabeth Stapleton’s role in the building of the priest hole is in a family history, and the timing of the renovation of Carlton Towers. The hide itself is impressive, located in a space between chimneystacks and underneath the floor (Figure 3.2). Access to the hole is through a trap door in the floor of a cupboard (closet). Carlton Towers is a rare find, as it is one of the few remaining priest holes left intact, and it is one of the only surviving hides commissioned by a widow, who used her newfound resources and autonomy to change the structure of her home to accommodate priests.

Country gentry were not the only Catholics with solitary households. According to John Ellys, a tailor in Dorset, a widow called Mrs. Jesope had nine priests at one time in her house in East Chickerell, because the structure “hath conveniences in it to hide the priests and massing priests in,” and it sat “solitary by itself.” While not much else is known about Mrs. Jesope, it is interesting that Ellys attributes Jesope’s success to the location and structure of her house. Its apparent location away from other buildings no doubt added an element of security and secrecy, while the house itself must have included a variety of spaces to conceal priests. It can safely be

401 I have looked through the catalogues of the Stapleton family held at the Hull History Centre (UDDCA1 and UDDCA2) and questioned archivists regarding evidence of the rebuild. Altogether, there is no surviving evidence for the rebuild, as most of the surviving documents relating to the Stapletons are dated too late. There are documents relating to recusancy fines for the family in 1616 attesting to the family’s Catholic faith, at Hull History Centre, UDDCA 29/1.
402 I am grateful to Pat Meanwell, retired historian and employee of Carlton Towers, for showing me the priest hide. Carlton Towers is not entirely open to the public, although it is available for weddings and special events. The room that holds the entrance to the hide is available to rent for such an occasion.
403 John Martin Robinson, Carlton Towers, 7.
Figure 3.1: Carlton Towers, North Yorkshire, England.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Binczewski, 2014

Figure 3.2: Priest hide in Carlton Towers, North Yorkshire, England.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Binczewski, 2014
assumed that Mrs. Jesope was not nobility, yet her household maintained the necessary characteristics of privacy and ample space for priest harboring.

Other widows, such as Jane Wiseman of Essex, capitalized on the social solitude that accompanied widowhood and established dower houses in order to harbor priests. Wiseman was known by Protestant authorities to be “a great harboure of priests and other bad persons,” in her house at Northend in Essex.405 John Gerard encouraged Wiseman to retire to her dower house, away from her son and his estate, presumably in order to capitalize on her social solitude. Wiseman’s harboring began following a meeting with Jesuit John Gerard while living at her son’s home at Braddocks. Gerard’s record of their interaction presents an example of the dependent relationship between widows and Jesuits presented in Jesuites Intrigues. Gerard writes, “This lady was such a holy soul that she felt that the world had nothing more to give her. On the day I came to the house she asked her son to bring me up to her room. As I entered she threw herself down at my feet and begged me to let her kiss them – she said I was the first member of the Society she had seen. I refused, and she then kissed the floor where I was standing. That day she was filled with a wonderful consolation of soul that has never left her.”406 Gerard insinuates that before his meeting Wiseman, she had little purpose or direction. He states, “I had persuaded their mother that it would be a good thing if she returned to her own house and maintained there a priest I had recommended to her. I felt that such a noble and generous soul should be a support to many, as in fact she became. Her house was a shelter and sure stronghold for Jesuits and all priests, and when I or others visited her she welcomed us with great

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405 List by Rich. Young of seven recusant servants found in Mr. Wiseman’s house, 1594, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/248 f. 160.
joy…Indeed she was a true widow, given up to all good works and full of zeal.”

Gerard persuaded Wiseman to leave the home of her son, set up her own house at Northend, and maintain her own priest for the good of the Society.

Eventually authorities searched Wiseman’s house, and though no priests were found, she was arrested and taken to London. Wiseman remained in prison until James I pardoned her at his accession. Wiseman’s activities reveal two things about widows’ role in priest harboring. First, her close relationship to John Gerard did in fact influence her agency as a widow. It appears that he inserted himself into her life as a new figure of male authority in the absence of her husband, and was responsible for her decision to create her own receptacle for priests. This action reveals the second point about Wiseman’s position, that she had full control over her money and time so that she could set up a dower house separate from the family, as an additional and separate house in which to harbor priests.

John Gerard’s recruitment of Jane Wiseman signals another factor that explains the prominence of widows as priest harborers. Without a husband to tend to, and frequently with children out of the house, devout, Catholic widows could dedicate their time and space to the use of the Catholic cause. They had a greater degree of social autonomy with which they could decide how and where to spend their time. This pattern is present in the biographies of Lady Magdalen Montague, Dorothy Lawson, and Anne Howard, each who chose to remain a widow so that they could better serve God. As a comparison to this social freedom and isolation, consider the limitations of marriage for Margaret Clitherow, the famed martyr and priest

408 Gerard, Autobiography, 63. A list of prisoners in 1595 lists a “Mrs. Wyseman” as being a prisoner at gatehouse for the felony of receiving seminary priests. Westminster Diocesan Archive, Volume V, 1595, No. 2, f. 3.
harborer of Yorkshire. Married to a conformist, Clitherow’s daily responsibilities hampered her devotions, as related by her biographer and confessor John Mush.410 Mush remarked that Clitherow would attend a service in the morning “if her husband or some importunate business letted her not,” and her daily devotions were dependent on when “she could get leisure; which almost she never had until four of the clock in the afternoon.”411 Hugh Aveling concedes that Clitherow was hindered by “the duties of a housewife of a Protestant family” and notes that “John Mush, her biographer, could only presume that she aspired someday, as a widow, to go abroad into a convent as a laysister.”412 Mush reports that Clitherow herself once stated, “Would to God, if it might stand with the duty to my husband and my house, that I were in prison again, where I might (being delivered from the disquietness and cares of this world) attend wholly to the service of my God.”413 Furthermore, Mush reported that a Catholic man once advised Clitherow to be careful with her harboring activities, “that either she would not with such danger receive any priests at all, or else very seldom…and that she ought not to adventure upon these things without licence of her husband.”414 While Mush’s account of Clitherow’s life is admittedly hagiographic in nature, his discussion of her status as a wife, and the ensuing limitations such a bond to a Protestant husband posed to both her time and actions, suggests that

domestic duties and allegiances of married women created restrictions absent in the lives of solitary widows.  

Numerous examples suggest that social seclusion from male authority is among the reasons why widows were especially prominent in priests’ confessions and witness statements, as they were able to use and create households for harboring without interference or competing allegiances. State papers, correspondence, and arrest warrants in the National Archives in London frequently feature widows as harborers. After the death of her husband Sir John Stourton, Lady Stourton moved to Chideock in Dorset, further isolating herself. Priests followed her there and stayed for more than a year. Edmund Campion’s confession in 1580 listed seven women harboring, of which three were widows, while the marital status of the others is unknown. In 1581, a servant betrayed the location of seminary priest John Payne at the house of the widow Lady Petre, which resulted in his arrest. Authorities charged Payne with high treason and executed him in 1582, yet available documentation suggests that the punishment to Lady Petre appears to have been minimal. A 1586 statement from Antony Tyrell, a servant and informant, lists five harborers of various priests, four of whom are women. One is a widow, while the others’ marital status is unknown. In 1591, an interrogation reported that Alice Hesketh, the widow of Sir Thomas Hesketh, harbored Thomas Barcroft at Martholme. A papist widow harbored priests in a house near Bugwith Ferry, which belonged to the Bishop of

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415 While marriage did pose restrictions, married women are of course still prominent in the history of the English Catholic community.
416 Examination of Wm. Holmes, late servant to Lady Stourton, before Sir Geo. Trenchard, Sir Ralph Horsey, and John Williams, April 21 1594, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/248 f.170.
417 Campion’s ‘confession of his being entertained at the houses of Lord Vaux, Sir Thomas Tresham, Sir Wm. Catesby, &c. with some notes by Lord Burghley, 1580, at the British Library, London, Lansdowne MS 30, Fol. 78.
419 Antony Tyrell’s Answer to the Articles, Aug. 31 1586, at the National Archives, London, SP 53/19 f.643.
Durham, as related in a letter from informant Anthony Atkinson to William Cecil in 1593. The widow Eleanor Hunt harbored the priest Christopher Wharton until authorities apprehended, tried, and executed him in 1600. Eleanor herself avoided execution, although she was imprisoned in York Castle for harboring a priest. An examination of seminary priest William Jheosopp recounts that he stayed some months with a widow named Anne Braye before going abroad to Valladolid. The statement of John Ellys, a former Catholic and tailor, in 1602 recounts nine priests being held at one time in the widow Mrs. Jesope’s house in Dorset. A 1605 letter from Thomas Wilson to the Earl of Salisbury lists thirty-one priest harborers, of which ten were women. Of those ten, seven were widows. In the 1606 confession of Anthony Sherlock, the priest lists the residences of the nobility and gentry with which he had stayed, with a curious plethora of women. The confession states:

He grew in acquaintance with Lady Stonor near Henley-on-Thames and stayed with her three or four years, often saying mass in her house. Next he moved to Warwicks. And at Brailes and Welsford was with a widow named Margaret Bishop for two or three years. Then to Worcs., where he said mass once or twice in the house of Lady Windsor and also at Mrs. Heath’s at Alchurch, at Hawkesley with Mr. Middlemore and at Tamworth in Warwicks. With Richard Dolphin two or three years. Then he was with widow Knowles at Ridware, with Mrs. Comberford at Wednesbury, with Mrs. Stanford at Parkington…

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422 Foley. Records, 216.
423 Trewe Storie of the Catholike Prisoners in Yorke Castle, c. 1599, at the British Library, London, Add MS 34250.
425 Declaration of John Ellys, of Bradmayne, Dorset, tailor, Sept. 11, 1602, Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol 12 [795], p. 366.
426 Thomas Wilson to the Earl of Salisbury, Nov. 20, 1605, Hatfield House, Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol 17 [988].
427 Confession of Anth. Sherlock a priest, Jan. 30 1606, at the National Archives, London, SP 14/18 f.64. Also cited in McGrath and Rowe, “Harbourers and Helpers,” 212.
428 As quoted in McGrath and Rowe, “Harbourers and Helpers,” 212. Anstruther has argued that Anthony Sherlock was not actually a priest. If this is true, it is especially interesting that he lists so many women, and widows for that matter, as harborers. Godfrey Anstruther, The Seminary Priests I. Elizabethan 1558-1603 (Ware and Ushaw College, 1968), 309-10.
The presence of widows is obvious in the statement, as is the fact that he frequently stayed in the house of widows for long periods. Furthermore, an examination of John Cotton on June 22, 1613 lists a widow’s house as a stop in his travels. The prominence of widows in these state papers and confessions illustrates that priests frequently trusted and used widows’ houses as sites of refuge.

Widowhood provided autonomous control over money, time, and domestic space in a way unavailable to most married and single women in early modern England. These financial resources and accompanying spatial autonomy provided at the death of a husband resulted in a variety of responses from those Catholic widows intent on harboring priests. Some created new spaces, built with the specific aim to harbor priests, such as Elizabeth Stapleton and Dorothy Lawson. Others adapted old places, such as the widow Jesope and Elizabeth Vaux. Still others, like Jane Wiseman, set out to acquire and create new spaces to help the Catholic mission. Dower houses, as separate domains for the use of a widow, were socially isolated, independent dwellings perfect for the use of priests desirous to avoid the public eye. The location of such houses was an important factor in the success of priest harboring. The level of privacy and seclusion, combined with accessibility, found in the above examples suggests that the creation and placement of such spaces itself was intentional. Dorothy Lawson chose to build St. Antony’s around the bend of the river – a location that was at once private and accessible. Elizabeth Vaux searched for the perfect house and eventually settled on creating one from the remnants of the existing Harrowden. The physical placement of the house, along with the structure created, benefited from the unique degree of autonomy granted to a widow, who had both the means and

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429 Examination of John Cotton, June 22, 1613, at Lincolnshire Archives, 8ANC7-126-129.
opportunity to create such a household. In this way, the bricks and mortar of place depended on the funds, planning, and execution of such women; factors that were in turn dependent on the societal structures that accompanied widowhood. In this way, both gender and marital status influenced the creation and use of households as centers for harboring priests.

Yet the protection afforded by the location and structure of households presents only part of this story on the unique opportunities of widowhood. An additional layer of privacy benefited widows’ households in particular, one based on psychological boundaries. Early modern cultural stereotypes of vulnerability and weakness created a sort of cultural camouflage for clandestine activities within the household. While the previous analysis examined physical boundaries – priest holes, and households – created by the economic and social autonomy of widowhood, the following focuses on created and imagined barriers. The metaphorical boundary that at times separated Protestant authorities from widows’ households was entirely contingent on both the gender and marital status of the widow harborer, revealing the ways place acculturated contemporary perceptions. Such an approach relies on abstract constructions of space that extend beyond the material and include those created and imagined.

**Psychological Boundaries: A Cultural Camouflage over Domestic Space**

To early modern English Catholics, priest hunters were ruthless invaders of privacy that threatened financial destitution, loss of freedom, or even death. Alexandra Walsham gives an early modern depiction of priest hunters as crews “of unscrupulous hooligans” who “burst in on Sundays and holy days while families were at prayer and ransacked ‘every corner – even womens beds and bosomes’ with such insolence that their villanies were ‘halfe a
Martyrdom’.\textsuperscript{431} Considering the antics of the famed priest hunter Richard Topcliffe alone, with his tactics of torture and spy networks, it is no wonder that Catholic authors wrote disparagingly of searchers as a whole.\textsuperscript{432} Yet, when analyzing descriptions of actual house searches, particularly of widows, it appears that not all searchers equitably burst through doors without regard to privacy. When it came to searching widows’ houses, some authorities exhibited leniency and sloth in executing their duties. This disconnect between assumptions about priest hunters and the reality of some house searches creates a new avenue of analysis into the ways cultural norms could influence actions and interactions between people. It appears that cultural stereotypes of widows as weak and vulnerable women transmitted onto the household, which created a psychological boundary at the threshold that acted as a sort of cultural camouflage for widows. This imagined boundary added an additional layer of privacy to the harboring household – a barrier that was unique to widows’ gender and marital status.

The perceived vulnerability of widows generated a coverture of unlikely culpability in treasonous actions against the state. As indicated in chapter two, early modern literature, saturated with biblical imagery, portrayed widows as women of destitution, poverty, helplessness, and lacking male guidance. While widowhood was not a veil that completely protected a house from pursuivants, state papers and correspondence suggest that it was a culturally understood taboo to infiltrate a widow’s privacy and cause trouble. At the very least, widows expected a sense of decorum from the men who accosted their doorstep. Consider the search of Baddesley Clinton, as narrated in the autobiography of Jesuit John Gerard. Eleanor

\textsuperscript{432} John Gerard frequently described the actions of pursuivants, who acted as leopards and “tore madly” through houses, Autobiography, 51, 71-72, 79-83.
Brookbsy, the widow of Edward Brooksby (d. 1581) and her unmarried sister Anne Vaux rented Baddesly Clinton from Henry Ferrers. The two sisters were daughters of William Vaux, famed recusant and patriarch of one of the most prominent Elizabethan Catholic houses. At the time of the search in October 1591, five Jesuits and two seminary priests were meeting at Baddesly Clinton over the span of a few days under the protection of the widow and sister, when at five o’clock in the morning, four priest-hunters approached the door. Gerard recounts that the pursuivants took the priests by surprise, and so they quickly stripped the altar, gathered personal items, and turned their beds over so they would not be warm to the touch of the searchers. They also had to hide their boots and swords, since “they would have roused suspicions if none of the people they belonged to were to be found.” Gathering items, flipping beds, stripping altars, and fitting seven men into a hide would have taken some time, especially since they were presumably still in their beds when the searchers approached the door. Gerard’s account gives a clue to the strategy used to keep the searchers at bay to give the priests time to conceal themselves. He writes, “Outside the ruffians were bawling and yelling, but the servants held the door fast. They said the mistress of the house, a widow, was not up yet, but was coming down at once to answer them. This gave us enough time to stow ourselves and all our belongings into a very cleverly built sort of cave” (Figure 3.4). Cultural convention left the searchers on the other side of the door while priests were able to hide away.

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433 While there is no existing evidence of Eleanor Brooksby and Anne Vaux letting Baddesley Clinton from Henry Ferrers, Baddesly Clinton remains the commonly assumed location of John Gerard’s narrative. Nancy Pollard Brown suggests that Rowington Hall, a neighboring moated house to Baddesley Clinton could be the location, although this is not widely accepted. Nancy Pollard Brown, “Paperchase: The Dissemination of Catholic Texts in Elizabethan England,” English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700 1 (1989):137.
A letter written by Jesuit Henry Garnet in 1593 also depicts a prevailing respect for widows’ houses. In it, he recounts that the unmarried sister, Anne Vaux, met the searchers pretending to be Eleanor, the widow and mistress of the house. Eleanor Brooksby is said to have been timid and found it difficult to cope with searchers, so she frequently hid in a separate hiding place and left Anne to talk to searchers. Garnet states that when Anne met the searchers, she said, “Do you think it right and proper that you should be admitted to a widow’s house before she or her servants or children are out of bed? Why this lack of good manners? Why come so early? Why keep coming to my house in this hostile manner? Have you ever found me unwilling to open the door to you as soon as you knocked?” Anne’s strength and authority in chastising the searchers, posing as mistress of the house and questioning their affront to a widow’s house, signals a potential benefit to widow priest-harborers. Gendered conventions required searchers to remain on the other side of the door. Eleanor Brooksby’s position as a widow allowed Anne to scold the searchers for approaching the house. Brooksby’s authority over the house ensured that these conventions masked the activities of the house. Instead of breaking through, the searchers waited, and this action cost them because after four hours of searching, they left the house with nothing.

436 Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, 188.
437 As quoted in Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, 188. The letter Anstruther is referring to was written by Henry Garnet to the Jesuit General in March 1593.
438 Baddesley Clinton is open to the public. https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/baddesley-clinton. I am grateful to the team at Baddesley Clinton for sharing their knowledge with me about the house and the three priest hides. One ran along the roof, and was used to divert the attention of searchers. In all actuality, it was probably not used because any noise made in the ceiling would betray the hidden priests, and any candles being used would have shown through the boards. However, it was an empty hide that could be shown to authorities, asserting that there were no priests hiding in the house. Another hide was between the walls and could be accessed by the fireplace. The third hide was accessible from the kitchen, and is purported to have been the hide used during this search. It is large enough to hide seven adults and it is positioned below the waterline of the moat surrounding the house, also consistent with John Gerard’s description. Gerard, *Autobiography*, 52.
Figure 3.3: Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire, England
Photo Credit: Jennifer Binczewski, 2014

Figure 3.4: Ladder descending into priest hide at Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire, England
Photo Credit: Kelly and Brigitte Norwood, 2014
The search of Kirby Hall in July 1599 likewise included a delayed group of searchers.

Yet again, John Gerard, one of the priests in hiding, reported:

Our only way to the hiding-place passed the door of the room where all the searchers were gathered. I heard them shouting out that they wanted to get on with their search without delay. One pursuivant actually pushed his head round the door to see who was passing, and some of the Catholics in the room told me afterward that he must have seen me as I went past... There they were, straining and shouting to get through and search the house, yet they halted behind in an unlocked room just long enough to allow us time to reach the hiding-place and shut ourselves safely in.  

Gerard does not provide a reason why the searchers remained in the room, apart from God’s protection. Apart from divine providence, the fact of the matter is, a group of searchers waited impatiently in a known harboring house. The place they waited was a room that did not have a physical barrier to the rest of the house. This odd delay had to be due to them waiting for something, or someone. At the time the pursuivants arrived, Elizabeth Vaux, the mistress of the house, was ill and in bed. Eventually, the searchers did tear through the house, even into Vaux’s room, but first, they waited. Perhaps, like the search at Baddesley Clinton, the searchers were waiting for the mistress to appear before conducting their search – a courtesy absent in descriptions of other searches with pursuivants who tore through “every corner – even womens beds and bosomes’ with such insolence that their villanies were ‘halfe a Martyrdome’.”

Potentially, cultural convention, based on gender and a respect for widows, created a psychological boundary between searchers and the rest of the household.

Cultural perceptions of widowhood not only molded pursuivants’ actions upon entering widows’ houses, but they also influenced prosecution of widows by the state. In this instance,

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widows used prevailing cultural definitions of widowhood as a vulnerable and weak status as coverture for their actions. A letter written by Jane Lovell [née Roper] to the Earl of Salisbury complains about a house search and asks for Salisbury’s protection “in the future as a gentlewoman of quality.” The fact that she asked for protection over her own house suggests that at the time of the letter, Lovell was a widow. She complained that the searchers claimed she was hiding priests, and they took away pictures and books while searching through her belongings. While the searchers did not find a priest on that occasion, an examination of Mrs. Anne Percye, a servant of Lovell, reports that three priests on separate occasions were in the house. Yet, when confronted about these charges, Lovell immediately reverts to her gender as a means to affront the charges. She promotes her vulnerability when she asks that she as a “poor gentlewoman” not be “subject to every base constable to examine, search, and apprehend the friends that come to her and her servants.” By capitalizing on her gender, and her apparent lack of male support and protection, Lovell rejects the charges, despite her overt sympathies for priest harboring. Around 1609, she wrote in response to Sir Edward Hoby, a Protestant author:

> If therefore we be defamed by such as you for harbouring of them [priests], we hold it noe disgrace and if for this cause, we buy the quiet of our consciences (which you in your frency call a fanaticall humour) at a high rate for the losses we sustaine, our sourles were bought at a higher price, and it will cost us more deare if we loose them.

441 Jane, Lady Lovell to the Earl of Salisbury, 1605, at Hatfield House, Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol 17 [1256].
442 Salisbury documents on the Examination of Lady Lovell, at Hatfield House, Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol. 17 [985].
443 Jane, Lady Lovell to the Earl of Salisbury, 1605, at Hatfield House, Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol 17 [1256].
Lady Lovell, if not a priest harborer herself, was a supporter of priest harborers. Her complaints to the Earl of Salisbury that she should be treated with fairness due to her gender, and her supposed innocence, tellingly contrasts with her own clandestine subversive actions.

Using rhetoric of women’s vulnerability was a tactic used by other widows as well, albeit, it was not always successful. In a 1581 letter from Henry Earl of Huntingdon to Secretary Walsingham, Huntingdon recounted a recent search at a widow’s house. He wrote, “I suddenly rode 20 miles west from this town, having heard from one of my spies that Windsor was in Arthington House, but when I got there he had gone. It is such a house to hide persons in as I have not seen before; I was assured that there are vaults underground, but where to find them I could not learn. Therefore, after I had examined the widow, who was or feigned to be sick in bed, and had sent her with the rest to prison, I had a mind to have plucked up the boards.”

I have yet to uncover the name of this widow, or her fate, but the explicit depiction of her frailty, whether real or faked, denotes a stigma attached to widows. While it did not deter Huntingdon, as he arrested her anyway, the widow at Arthington falls into a prevailing pattern of manipulated vulnerability.

This camouflage provided by widowhood perhaps explains why a man named Thomas Longe chose to harbor papists and priests in his widowed mother’s house. The mother and widow, Alice Longe, a “simple oulde woman”, submitted a complaint and swore that she was not acquainted with the practices of her son, and was therefore not responsible for the priests, books, and popish items found in her house. In this instance, a harborer took advantage of his widowed mother and chose her house as a location to hide away objects and people. The fact that

445 Henry Earl of Huntingdon to Sec. Walsingham, 1581, at the National Archives, London, SP 15/27/1 f.40.
446 Note of misdemeanours, Feb. 5 1584, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/168 f. 13.
she filed an official complaint against her son suggests that she was not part of the scheme. What this shows is that yet again, a widow’s house provided a beneficial place to hide people and items, even without her knowledge. It could be argued that the widow’s house itself maintained a certain character that had benefits unattached to other spaces. Presumably, the son Thomas had his own dwelling, yet he chose to use the house of a “simple oulde woman.”

Age and frailty of the owner could act as a cover over domestic space, suggesting that houses adopted the stereotypes of isolation and vulnerability associated with widowed owners. The benefits of social isolation are perhaps why widows’ houses were an option when others were not. Seminary priest James Brushford arrived in England in 1585, the same year as the statute against priests and their harborers. He stated, “I found every body so fearful as none would receive me into their houses.” He and another priest, John Taddy, maintained their own place in the woods, and then moved to the house of Mrs. Tempest, a widow. Tempest was also known to have harbored Father Weston as well. Even when there were other choices available, widows’ houses oftentimes appeared to be the best choice. In 1599, Priest Henry Chaderdon described that while he took refuge with the widow of Sir Thomas Gillorde, she offered to place him into the service of Catholic noblemen, “where I could freely live according to the Catholic faith.” She offered four choices: her brother, her son, William Shelley, and Viscount Montague. After the imprisonment of his friend and a foiled plan to travel to Rome, he decided to remain with the widow for two years. He left the widow’s house one year after she remarried. Amidst other choices, Chaderdon chose a widow. While his stated reasons to stay

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447 Foley, Records, 276.
448 Foley, Records, 277.
449 Foley, Records, 548.
450 Foley, Records, 549.
451 Foley, Records, 550.
with widow Gillorde included a desire to remain with the woman who had been so kind to him, it can be assumed that her house also met a necessary degree of safety and protection.\footnote{Foley, \textit{Records}, 549.}

As shown in the above examples of house searches, widowhood did not protect a house from being searched, although it is apparent that respect for the vulnerable and weak demographic did influence the manner and speed of searches themselves. In the same way gender, marital status, stereotypes of weakness, and an unthreatening demeanor created a psychological barrier between searchers and widows’ houses, these characteristics permeated the enforcement of legislation against widows when caught. Previous historians have claimed that Catholic wives maintained a legal loophole against anti-Catholic legislation, which gave them an advantage unavailable to other women. Married women were part of a duplicitous pair; while husbands outwardly conformed, wives privately supported other Catholics or priests.\footnote{See Walsham, \textit{Church Papists}.} As discussed in chapter one, this coverture is why historiography has focused on the role of wives in priest harboring, since widows were legally subject to the laws against such a practice and were therefore assumed to be legally constrained in their efforts. However, in the same studies that espouse the benefits of married women, most of the individual women discussed were widows at the time of their most active contribution to Catholic survival. One way to account for this discrepancy is to conclude that legislation did not necessarily line up with the enforcement of said legislation. The loophole afforded to wives who could hide under the coverture of their husbands becomes less unique considering the fact that in reality, widows were oftentimes ignored by authorities for a variety of reasons, including age, advantageous personal networks, and communal support. The reality of local enforcement stood in stark contrast to the hard-lined

\footnote{Foley, \textit{Records}, 549.}
language of the laws against harboring priests, and it is for this reason that widows are prominent in histories of active Catholic women. By examining the lives of individual widows, it becomes apparent that gender, personal relationships, and community dynamics all played a role in the enforcement of legislation against widows. While technically, widowhood presented legal limitations to harboring priests, realistically, other factors nullified to some degree such disadvantages, at least for some widows.

While their _femme sole_ legal status left widows liable to prosecution for breaking the law, Elizabeth I shied away from pursuing and punishing women.\textsuperscript{454} The fact that executioners met only three Catholic women during Elizabeth’s reign supports this theory. What is more, there are surviving accounts of Elizabeth pardoning women arrested for harboring priests, an offence that was by law considered treasonous.\textsuperscript{455} The treatment of Jane Wiseman also alludes to gender and status as being a loophole for widows as well. The Essex Assizes indicted Wiseman for “receiving, comforting, helping and maintaining priests,” and sentenced her to be pressed to death; however, her sentence was commuted to imprisonment.\textsuperscript{456} Gerard maintained, “Her position and good name gave the Queen’s councilors second thoughts. They did not want to shock London by their barbarity, so after her condemnation they had her removed to another and worse prison and kept her there.”\textsuperscript{457} Roland Connelly states that the Chronicle of Saint Monica’s Convent, Louvain explains, “by bribes her [Jane Wiseman] son got one to speak a good word unto the Queen in his mother’s behalf. Who, when she understood how for so small a matter she should have been put to death, rebuked the justices of cruelty and said she should not

\textsuperscript{454} Newman, “The Role of Women,” 12.
\textsuperscript{455} _Pardon to Grace, wife of William Claxton, of Waterhouse, co. Durham, for harbouring a seminary priest_, June 30, 1594, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/249 f. 31.
\textsuperscript{456} Gerard, _Autobiography_, 65 and _Richard Young to [the Queen]_, Nov. 30, 1594, at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire. Vol. 5: 1591-1595, [51], p. 24.
\textsuperscript{457} Gerard, _Autobiography_, 65.
Pardons, commuted sentences, the actual number of women executed for treasonous crimes, together with prevailing notions that Elizabeth did not like to persecute women, point to the fact that Elizabeth’s own conscience influenced prosecution towards women.459

Social standing also combined with gender to relieve the pressure of prosecution for some widows. The affluent widow Lady Cecily Stonor retired to Stonor Lodge upon her widowhood and set up the main house at Stonor Park as a refuge for priests. Nestled amidst the trees of the Oxfordshire countryside, Edmund Campion and others utilized a secret hiding place in the house above the front porch as both a priest hide and a secret room for printing Catholic texts.460 In 1581, searchers led by Sir Henry Neville arrested thirty-two persons in Lady Cecily Stonor’s house for harboring priests and printing Catholic texts, yet Neville ordered Stonor’s release into the custody of her son. Robert Julian Stonor suggests that the leniency afforded to Stonor was due to her son, Francis, who was both a conformist and maintained a friendship with William Cecil.461 Roland Connelly argues, “The blunt fact seems to be that she was the head of the most powerful family in Oxfordshire and nobody in the district or the county would wish to tangle with the Stonors. Everybody in the county knew that she was a practicing Catholic but they also knew the power of her family and the power of her friends.”462 Yet it was not only familial connections or social standing, as her age and health also played into the council’s decision. Despite the fact that the Privy Council knew she was “receiving and harboring of certen

459 Evidence that Elizabeth shied away from imprisoning people for religious beliefs in general can be found in a document ordering the release of Lady Lovell and her son, Robert, from prison in Norfolk. They had been imprisoned for “cause of conscience.” Lady Lovel imprisonment release, 1585, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/181 f. 210. This same woman would later be described as “the most passionate besotted poor woman that ever was with the opinion of the Jesuits.” Sir Thomas Edmondes to the Earl of Salisbury, August 10, 1608, Calendar of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol. 20, 1608, [426] p. 225.
162

lwede persones taken in her howse”, the Council was content to let her live in her own house “by reason of her age and sycknes.” Stonor’s attributes as a sickly, aged woman without the protection of a husband, who relied on the care of her son meant that the Privy Council did not consider her a serious risk; therefore, the Council was slow to punish her severely as a threat. It was not until 1592, after more than a decade of harboring priests, that authorities recognized her as a threat to the community and imprisoned the seventy-year-old widow until her death.

As with Stonor, widows’ unique networks, political connections, and personal relationships had a direct impact on their culpability under Elizabethan and Stuart regimes. Understandably, a husband’s perceived allegiance or disloyalty to the crown could influence a widow’s treatment in the courts after his death. When comparing Anne Howard and Lady Magdalen’s treatment by the Privy Council and Elizabeth I, the contrast in treatment based on a husband’s loyalty to the crown is apparent. Both women were nobles (countess and viscountess, respectively), were wealthy, and known Catholics, yet their treatment under the law lies in stark contrast. Anne Howard’s father-in-law was executed in 1572 for his attempt to marry Mary Queen of Scots, and Anne’s husband was imprisoned for treason in 1585. These treasonous connections to male members of the family did little to help Anne’s relationship with Elizabeth I. According to Anne’s biographer, Elizabeth engaged in a personal attack against Howard, and endeavored to “cross and afflict her [Countess Anne] upon all occasions.” Elizabeth refused to allow Anne to visit Philip in the Tower, although she allowed other wives to visit imprisoned spouses, she misinformed Philip that Anne bore a daughter instead of a son and heir, and after Philip’s death, Elizabeth refused to give Anne her inheritance. In the end, Anne had to pay

464 The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, and of Anne Dacres, his wife, edited from the original manuscript by The Duke of Norfolk, E.M. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857), 191.
£10,000 in order to obtain the inheritance.\textsuperscript{465} Elizabeth’s treatment of Anne seems to have stemmed from a personal vendetta and general dislike of the woman, as shown through a story related by Anne’s biographer. He writes:

\begin{quote}
The Queen some time after that, comeing either for pleasure or curiosity to Arundell-house, where the Countess then lived, but was absent at that present, by the advice of some in authority, and espying in the glass of one of the windows a sentence written with a diamond insinuating hopes of a future better fortune which she imagin’d, as it seems, to have been done by the Countesse; with her own hand she writ underneath another sentence expressing much passion and disdain. And this in all likelyhood she did on purpose to grieve and afflict the poor Lady who soon after her return thither did see them, and easily perceiv’d by whom, and for what end they were written.\textsuperscript{466}
\end{quote}

Elizabeth’s disdain for the Howard family, stemming from a treasonous Catholic past, manifested itself in financial ruin of the Howards. Eventually, Anne managed to get back on her feet, particularly after the death of Elizabeth. She became a pillar of faith in her community, a transformation that will be discussed in the following chapter. What is pertinent here is that her treatment by Elizabeth shows that familial connections and personal relationships had a dramatic impact on widows’ treatment under the law.

In stark contrast stands Lady Magdalen Montague, a known priest harborer and Catholic bastion in her community, particularly after the death of her husband, Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague in 1592. Yet even while he was alive, the Montague family remained in good standing with the crown and Protestant authorities, despite their open Catholicism.\textsuperscript{467}

Letters survive between Anthony Browne and Sir William More, a commissioner for recusants and seminaries, which attest to a congenial relationship despite religious differences. These letters detail advice for sick children, contain greetings between wives, and even invitations,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{465} For the treatment of Anne Howard by Queen Elizabeth, see Lives, 193-195. \\
\textsuperscript{466} Lives, 193-194. \\
\textsuperscript{467} Browne served as one of the English envoys at the conference at Bruges between Elizabeth I and Philip II, 1565-1566. See British Library, London, Add. MSS 48011 f. 1, for evidence of his importance in Elizabeth’s court.
\end{footnotesize}
extended by Lord Montague to More, for christenings and marriages of his children. These letters suggest that the Montagues outwardly conformed through attendance to public religious services, such as marriages and christenings. They showed hospitality and friendship to a man who was on the commission to root out recusants, which could infer that they were not recusants themselves, and therefore attended Protestant services. In January 1592, the same year Anthony Browne died, he made a speech to his friends at West Horsley, including the local sheriff, asserting his constant loyalty to the Queen despite being a Catholic. He admits being “Catholique in my religion, which I keepe to myself.”

The Montagues’ position as church papists is further strengthened considering that later that year, Sir William More received a letter from the Privy Council stating that the Queen was “disturbed by the notable backwardness and defection in religion” in southern England. The Council asked the commissioners to commit the leading recusants in Surrey to the houses of people “of ability and account and of good disposition in religion” at the recusants’ expense. Any commissioners not willing to do so would be jailed at their own expense. Not one member of the Montague family was subject to this form of house arrest, despite Browne’s open acknowledgement of his Catholic faith.

Their coverture of good graces camouflaged their subversive actions so well that the Montagues reportedly hid priests during a weeklong visit from Elizabeth herself in 1591. After

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468 Surry History Centre, 6729/8/99, 104, 111, 118, 121, 122.
469 To my knowledge, neither Antony Browne nor Magdalen Browne appeared in recusant lists.
470 A manuscript account of the speech survives at the Surry History Centre, LM/1856.
471 See Walsham, Church Papists.
472 Letter from the Privy Council, the Court at Bisham, 19 Aug. (1592?), at Surrey History Centre, 6729/10/86.
473 Connelly, Women of the Catholic Resistance, 133. A poem praising Queen Elizabeth, including an address to her on her visit to Cowdray Park, is held at the Surrey History Centre, LM/1329/257. While this document does not prove that there was indeed a visit in 1591, it is an additional piece of evidence for the popular story. See an account of Elizabeth’s trip in August 1591 to Cowdray in Mrs. Charles Roundell, Cowdray: The History of a Great English House (London: Bickers & Son, 1884), 38-44.
Anthony Browne died, Lady Magdalen’s confessor and biographer maintained that Montague increased her zeal in supporting the Catholic faith. As a widow, Lady Magdalen had two houses in which she frequently harbored priests as they came and went from London, although she spend most of her time at Battle Abbey in East Sussex. The great irony of this dower house is that Henry VIII gave Battle Abbey to Lady Magdalen’s father-in-law following the dissolution of the monasteries, and while under the sole ownership of Lady Magdalen, it became known in the community as “little Rome.” A Protestant informant is even purported to have complained that the town surrounding Battle had “greatly decayed” following the arrival of Lady Montague. Despite Lady Montague’s Catholic presence in the community, authorities rarely bothered her. In 1593, a warrant was provided to the priest-hunter, Richard Topcliffe, to search the house of Lady Montague for “the apprehencion of certain priestes and other dangerous persons remayninge in the house.” The warrant included a list of six persons reported to have been under her protection. It appears the search did not produce any priests. One such priest, Robert Gray, remained free until Richard Topcliff captured and tortured him later that year, during which he confessed to being a previous beneficiary of Lady Montague’s hospitality.

Apart from one house search, Lady Montague emerged unscathed, despite her frequent subversive actions. In fact, her biographer claimed that the King’s Council wrote a letter on April 19, 1607 to the Attorney General commanding that she be left alone. It stated, “For so

476 As cited in Roundell, Cowdray, 34.
479 In 1609, her grandson, Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, had his house searched. More research is needed to ascertain the extent to which Lady Magdalen Montague’s actions hindered the treatment of future Catholics in her family. House Search of Anthony Browne, 5 Sept. 1609, at the British Library, London, BL Lansdowne MS 153 f.23.
much (say they) as the Lady Montague, the wife of Antony Viscount Montague deceased, is lately called in question for default of conformity in religion according to the laws of this Kingdom, in regard that she is a noblewoman, aged, and by reason of her fidelity in the time of Queen Elizabeth was never called in question, it pleaseth the King’s Majesty that in her old years she be free from molestation.” The fact that her godson was Sir Julius Caesar, Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer under the reign of James I, could have influenced the leniency afforded to her by the Council. A series of letters written from Lady Magdalen to Sir Julius Caesar reveal her cordial relationship to him as his godmother. She asks for favors for friends and signals that Caesar has helped her petitions in the past. Lady Montague’s familial connections, papist concessions, her relationship with Elizabeth herself, and the leniency afforded to her age contrasts her treatment as a widow to Anne Howard’s financial ruin. The comparison between these two noble women reveals the fickleness of legislative enforcement. Personal vendettas, outward pledges of conformity, and familial connections all swayed the severity of prosecution.

Together with age, gender, and family connections, the surrounding community and the leniency of local magistrates also influenced the enforcement of legislation. Recent works on coexistence at the local level throughout early modern Europe suggest that individuals and communities negotiated the reception and implementation of reformation at varied levels. This variance in how individuals, from Protestant neighbors and families to local authorities and

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480 Smith, An Elizabethan Recusant House, 54.
house searchers, enforced the penal laws of sixteenth and early seventeenth century England emerges visibly in dealings with Catholic widows. The negotiable boundaries of penal enforcement is most comically represented in the story that Anne Howard reportedly sent a venison pie to a particular watchman every Christmas in gratitude for his allowing the priest Blackwell to escape her house while he was posted on guard. Bribes, baked goods, blind eyes, and lenient local magistrates all contributed towards some widows’ invisibility from authorities. The widow Dorothy Lawson employed Catholic servants, harbored priests, and held Catholic services in her house in Newcastle, all without so much as a house search, arrest warrant, or fine. A pamphlet, printed in 1883 to celebrate the completion of a new Catholic school chapel situated on Dorothy Lawson’s property, attributed her camouflage from authorities to her respect in the community and the good graces of the “men of Tyneside, who so nobly refused to trample upon the rights of conscience!” At her death, her biographer boasted that her funeral was attended by even the magistrates and alderman of Newcastle, “where with a ceremony of such civility as astonish’d all they deliver’d it to the Catholicks only, who with another priest, laid [her] with Catholick ceremonies in the grave.” While the overtly Catholic nature of her funeral is uncorroborated in other sources, the exact date and place of her burial, as described by Palmes, matches the burial register for Newcastle.

Upon reflecting on the exploits of Lady Montague, Dorothy Lawson, Anne Howard, and others, a drawback to this analysis of liminal figures in society who evaded authorities emerges.

483 Lives, 216-17.
485 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 61.
486 “Mrs. Dorotie Lawson wife to Roger Lawson…buried”, entered for March 1631/2. Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn, EP 09-02, p. 63. The role of communal coexistence and the importance of local dynamics in the success of Lawson and others will be discussed in chapter four.
Most sources only reveal the widows accused or caught with priests in their home, or those widows affluent enough to maintain priests who later wrote biographies of their lives. Other widows, who successfully evaded authorities, and therefore documentation, are thus also elusive to modern day historians. However, what this analysis does show is that widows were consistently present in state papers and correspondence relating to the searching and capturing priests, even before the 1585 legislation. Very few were imprisoned themselves, and even fewer suffered a greater fate than imprisonment for their culpability. However, the example of Anne Line does reveal that widowhood did not provide complete coverture from the law. Unlike Dorothy Lawson, Magdalen Montague, and other women of economic means, Line became entirely dependent on the Jesuit John Gerard upon her widowhood, who placed her under the care of another family.\footnote{This family was the Wisemans at Braddocks. Connelly, Women of the Catholic Resistance, 107.} Shortly after, Gerard chose Line to take care of his household where priests would frequently come and go. He wrote, “When I decided to establish the house I mentioned above I could think of no better person than her to put in charge of it. She was able to manage the finances, do all the housekeeping, look after the guests, and deal with the inquiries of strangers.”\footnote{Gerard, Autobiography, 103.} Line became famous as a harborer, to the point that Gerard distanced himself from her house because he felt it “unsafe for me to frequent any house she occupied.”\footnote{Gerard, Autobiography, 103.} Line rented rooms in a second additional building, in which she also harbored priests. According to Gerard, Line allowed too many people to attend Mass and attracted the attention of constables. On Candelmas day in 1601, searchers approached Line’s house during Mass, but met a barred door, which deterred them long enough for the priests to escape. Despite the absence of a priest, the pursuivants arrested Line, brought her to trial, and convicted her of priest harboring on evidence.
from a witness’s testimony. She was executed at Tyburn on February 27, 1601, and became the only woman executed for the specific charge of harboring priests.

Anne Line’s treatment and fate contrasts with that of other widow priest harborers and thereby provides a necessary comparison for the arguments of this chapter. Line lacked the economic independence of other widows, and therefore was unable to create or adapt her own space for harboring priests like Dorothy Lawson and Elizabeth Stapleton. Line’s house was too small and ultimately unfit for the number of people who attended Mass, and for that reason, she attracted the attention of the authorities. Furthermore, her location in London, in dangerous proximity to the Privy Council, stands in contrast to other widows who had the means to leave London and create a refuge in the countryside, such as Elizabeth Vaux. In addition, the judge set down Line’s sentence and execution within the space of a month, whereas other widows sentenced to death, such as Jane Wiseman and Eleanor Hunt, benefitted from a long imprisonment and eventual commutation of their sentence. Line also lacked the social standing, familial relationships, and communal ties of widows such as Lady Magdalen Montague, Dorothy Lawson, and Anne Howard. It also appears that Line’s gender or social position as a widow had no bearing on the actions of the searchers or her sentencing. The barrier searchers encountered at the threshold was not psychological; it was merely a physical barricade of the door. Anne Line embodies the vulnerability of widowhood, as a woman without economic means, protection, and proper connections to protect her illicit acts. Her execution is perhaps one reason why so many

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491 Of the three women executed in Elizabethan England, Line was the only one charged with harboring priests. Margaret Ward was executed for helping a priest escape from prison, while Margaret Clitherow was executed for refusing to plead, although she was a priest-harborer. See Connelly, *Women of the Catholic Resistance*, for biographies of both women.
historians have sidelined the role of widows in priest harboring, since “once widowed, these women became liable to bear the costs of their own actions.”492 The deaths of Catherine Bellamy, Dame Cecily Stonor, and Eleanor Hunt in prison also suggest that gender, status, and community did not safely guard all widows.493 Yet, as has been shown, some widows did manipulate their newfound social frameworks at the death of their husbands in order to create a veil of protection around their household. While this cultural camouflage was not available to all widows, with Anne Line being the prime exception to the rule, the overwhelming presence of widows as priest harborers suggests that there were patterns in opportunity and availability contingent on gender and marital status.

**Conclusion**

After 1585, there could be no question as to where the government stood when it came to harboring priests. Yet, hundreds of Catholics participated in the treacherous, yet persistent, underground community of harborers. Some hides were a clever invention of Nicholas Owen, while others were made from a natural gap in a prevailing structure. When examined alone, these edifices fail to contribute much beyond their structure, dimensions, and use. When examined alongside the individuals who maintained and owned the house within which they sat, their history tells of how patriarchal structures and cultural norms influenced the use, perception, and impact of priest-holes. Of the more than one-hundred individuals executed for using such structures, only one was a widow. Yet widows’ presence in arrest warrants, correspondence, biographies, state papers, and lists are prolific, as this chapter has suggested. The discrepancy between agency and recognition for that agency, both historically and historiographically, lies in

492 Bastow, “Worth Nothing but very Wilful,” 595.
493 For an example of a list of prisoners, see *Trewe Storie of the Catholicke Prisoners in Yorke Castle*, c. 1599, at the British Library, London, Add MS 34250. Included are Mrs. Anne Teshe, Mrs. Bridget Maskene, and Eleanor Hunt, all widows condemned of high treason for priest harboring and persuading people to be Catholic.
the vulnerable, isolated, and ambiguous attributes associated with widowhood. The household, a space where widows experienced more freedom and autonomy than other women, was the nexus of these identities. Viewing the history of priest harboring from the vantage point of widows and their households offers a change in perspective from previous analyses. It reveals that individuals, who created, adapted, and maintained households, not only controlled the physical attributes of place, but also transmitted cultural and psychological meaning onto space. There are more layers of privacy within the history of priest harboring, outside the structure of the physical priest hole itself. Location, structure of the house, and the cultural meanings attributed to the space itself and the inhabitants within all contributed towards choosing and maintaining a harboring household. Widowhood itself, with its accompanying social, cultural, and economic structures, was at the nexus of female domesticity and religious subversion.
CHAPTER FOUR:

PROMOTING CATHOLICISM: PILLARS OF FAITH IN THE COMMUNITY

For whereas formerly obliged to wedlock she was constrained to think, as the Apostle saith, how also to please her husband, now, that band being dissolved and having gotten a more settled freedom of exercising her virtue, she applied herself more attentively to the service of God.

England may lament that it hath lost such a pillar of faith, so worthy an ornament of religion, such a rare example of virtues. Nay, it may rather rejoice that once it had or rather hath such a one”

- Richard Smith, *An Elizabethan Recusant House*, 1627

The cluster of buildings comprising Battle Abbey stand today as a memento to England’s layered past. The site rests in Hastings on the medieval battleground in East Sussex where William, the Duke of Normandy, began the Norman Conquest in 1066. In 1070, in commemoration of the battle and as penance for the brutal killings during the conquest, King William I established a Benedictine abbey on the battlefield with the high altar positioned atop the spot the Anglo-Saxon King Harold fell. In the 1530s, amidst the dissolution of the monasteries, Henry VIII disbanded the monastic house and gifted the lands and buildings to his friend, Sir Anthony Browne. It continued as a private residence until after the First World War when it became a school, which it remains today, along with being a popular tourist site. After 950 years, visitors can walk and view the grand gatehouse, battlefield, and remaining ruins of monastic buildings. Within these layers of history is a moment in time missing from the

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495 *Crown Grant (Letters Patent) King Henry VIII to Sir Anthony Browne*, Aug. 15, 1539, at The Keep: East Sussex Record Office, BAT 269. Henry VIII granted Battle to Montague for the “good true and faithful services which our beloved servant Anthony Brown hath rendered to us before these times of our special favour.” For a transcription of the Letters Patent, see BAT 270.
guidebook, eclipsed by the fame of Hastings and Henry VIII’s dissolution. From 1592 to
1608, historical irony saw Battle serve as a refuge for English Catholics suffering under penal
laws. “Little Rome”, as it was fondly called in 1627 by seminary priest Richard Smith, was run
by Lady Magdalen Montague, the widow of the son of Sir Anthony Browne.

Following her husband’s death in 1592, Magdalen spent most of her time at Battle. She
had a chapel built within the house, complete with a stone altar, a choir for singers, and a pulpit
for the priests who frequented her house to say Mass, Richard Smith being one of three
regulars. Catholic visitors to the house could expect to hear a sermon almost every week,
celebrate feast days, and witness the sacrament of the Mass just as they had done before
England’s break with Rome. At times, more than 100 people attended Mass in the domestic
chapel, a Catholic community comprised of family, neighbors, servants, and even the local
poor. The personage of this widow, together with the house within which she propagated the
survival of Catholicism, present two opportunities for analysis into the post-Reformation
Catholic community. One is the impact of gender and marital status on the control and authority
over domestic space; the other is the complex and adaptive nature of domestic space itself, as it
could serve as both a private residence and a meeting space for a clandestine minority religious
group. It is the purpose of this chapter to intertwine both gender and spatial analysis to examine
how widowhood manipulated domestic space for a variety of uses.

The previous chapter examined how the cultural, social, and legal pressures, stereotypes,
and opportunities within widowhood defined the structure and place of households. This analysis
uncovered the layers of privacy provided by widowhood and the ways this coverture affected the

497 Also usually at the house was M. Thomas More, the great grandchild of Sir Thomas More and M. Thomas Smith.
499 Smith, *An Elizabethan Recusant House*, 44.
practice of harboring priests. The examination of privacy continues here, but with the intent to uncover how widows could adapt and transform their private households into semi-public places of influence by choosing to open their household for communal mass. The chapter also extends this semi-public space into the local community by examining how widows catechized, supported, and converted their neighbors from outside the household. Instead of the house being the main actor in harboring priests, based on the identity subscribed to it by its owner, this chapter shows how the widow adapted, transformed, and redefined space through their autonomy, taking a more active role in the management and use of the household than married women could. Widows’ ability to manage and maintain property in their own name gave them independence from male authorities, from husbands, to ministers, to officials. This independence resulted in an availability of time and resources unavailable to married women. Agency in widowhood not only contributed towards harboring priests, but in a more local and public fashion, they likewise were able to open their homes to trusted local Catholics for Mass. This act was markedly different from harboring priests, a secretive, exclusive, and independent act. Holding Mass within the house was inclusive, semi-public, and required an adaptive notion of domestic space as ritual space. Thus, chapters three and four together reveal the adaptability and shifting meanings attributed to a single household and the way these could influence interactions within space based on a number of societal factors. Apart, these chapters highlight individual opportunities to sustain the faith that were contingent on gender and marital status.

This chapter argues that Catholic households were a permeable, semi-public space where widows simultaneously encouraged a clandestine community while protecting itself from outsiders. While this sphere of influence occupied spaces typically considered public and private, as it included households, neighbor’s houses, and streets, the structures of widowhood and the
nature of the interactions within that space transformed and blurred lines of privacy to both dichotomously protect and promote Catholicism. Following a brief discussion of legislation pertaining to domestic and ritual space, the chapter is divided into two sections, one based within the confines of household walls, the other outside within the local community. The first section maneuvers through the interior household and examines the space, materials, and people who interacted within private, domestic space to both preserve and participate in Catholic rituals. Successful mass centers run by widows had four common qualities: a solitary location, accessibility to local Catholics, an adaptable space, and a controlled setting comprised of trusted servants and kin. The economic and social autonomy, together with cultural stereotypes, associated with widowhood influenced the creation of all four spatial characteristics. At the same time, privacy was necessary to hide from authorities, yet careful publicity was necessary to encourage and call neighbors to Catholic worship. This semi-public space mirrors the liminal space widows occupied within society itself. The second section moves outside the house walls and examines the activity of Catholic widows within the local community as pillars of piety and charity. The liminal place of widows in society gave them ample time and resources to devote to catechizing their communities, signaling a unique strength in marginalization. Together, both sections reevaluate the clandestine English Catholic community to show how gender and marital status influenced agency within the private spheres of the preservation and promotion of Catholicism.

In the aftermath of the Reformation, individuals who comprised the religious minority in any given country had to find and create separate spaces to sustain their religious practice. In most, if not all areas, there was a desire from magistrates and monarchs for unity, although there were a variety of responses to promote such homogeneity. Even before France’s 1598 Edict of
Nantes, Huguenots created spaces outside of town centers for worship. Benjamin Kaplan’s work on the schuilkerken – clandestine house chapels – in the post-Reformation Low Countries and beyond reveals that Catholics were free to worship behind the private walls of the house, so long as they did not disrupt the community. Kaplan’s analysis argues that the distinction in early modern Europe between public and private space was as much a cultural fiction as it was a physical reality. Dissenting worship within the private confines of a house chapel did not go unnoticed, yet the private façade preserved the monopoly of a community’s official church in the public sphere. This culturally created “fiction of privacy”, so labeled by Kaplan, manifested itself in England in the private rooms and chapels of nobility and gentry. Catholic plots such as the Northern Rebellion, the plan to oust Elizabeth I in favor of the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, the Spanish Armada, and the Gunpowder Plot incited a fear of Catholics as a threat to the very survival and unity of the nation. To be a practicing Protestant was a matter of allegiance to the crown, not just conformity in religion. The close link between civic and religious life, with real and perceived fears of treasonous acts from Catholics, meant that quiet Catholic practice behind private walls was the only option for those subjects whose allegiance remained with Rome.


502 Kaplan, “Fictions of Privacy”, 1036.
Yet, in England, the stifling of Catholic practice even permeated the private walls of the house through injunctions and legislation, which moved to limit and control Catholic people, ritual, and materials. In April 1559, two parliamentary acts positioned the legislative agenda of Elizabeth I as a response to the decades of internal religious and political turmoil prompted by the English Reformation. As discussed in chapter one, the first act established Elizabeth as the supreme governor in all things temporal and ecclesiastical within the dominion of the English crown, while the second instated a uniform religion, separating England from the conflicting Catholic and Protestant factions on the continent. These two legislative acts, the Act of Supremacy and Act of Uniformity, constituted an official effort to determine the religious path of England and all her realms, while establishing the sovereignty of the new queen. In June 1559, a set of injunctions detailed specific requirements for private worship in the household, which directly affected Catholic worship.

The first twenty-eight injunctions echoed those enacted by Edward VI in 1547, while the remaining twenty-five were new additions that supported the purpose of strengthening religion in England. The injunctions provided Elizabeth with superiority over all her dominion, and acted to advance a true religion, while at the same time attempting to eradicate all abuses of uniformity. There were no exclusions, no exceptions, only a call for complete uniformity under Elizabeth’s ecclesiastical sovereignty, despite the prevailing presence of Catholicism. With these new injunctions, Elizabeth attempted to extend control into interior spaces, particularly over materials used for worship. Injunction twenty-three controlled the presence and use of materials in local parish churches. The injunction called for all clergy to:

Roger Manning maintains that even in the 1570s, half of the greater gentry in Sussex were Catholic. *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 131.
Take away, utterly extinct, and destroy all shrines, coverings of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindals and rolls of wax, pictures, paintings, and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glass windows, or elsewhere within their churches or houses; and they shall exhort all their parishioners to do the like within their several houses.  

The fact that the houses of all parishioners are included in this act suggests that official policy intended to extend into the trappings of private households. William Cecil and Elizabeth’s advisors who drafted the injunctions called for the destruction of all forms of “superstition” by the clergy appointed by the queen’s authority. Not only do the Elizabethan Injunctions call for the destruction of idolatry, but they also commanded a continued abandonment of these materials. “No persons keep in their houses any abused images, tables, pictures, paintings, and other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition.” Thus, by the attempted control over the place of worship, and the religious materials allowed within both houses and churches, the Injunctions of 1559 show that the religious legislation of Elizabeth I aimed for control over both the public and private realms in order to instate a ‘pure’ religion. 

The Elizabethan legislative agenda continued this offensive attack against those who endangered the conformity and loyalty of English subjects. Individuals who heard or performed Mass, refused to attend Protestant services, or engaged in other Catholic rituals, whether public or private, could suffer fines, imprisonment, or even death. In 1581, the fine for failing to attend Protestant services increased from 12 pence (or pennies) to 20 pounds. A 1578 letter from the Privy Council to the sheriff and justices of the peace of Surrey complained that massing priests continued to move around the county, disguised as artisans and saying Mass, thereby converting

505 Gee & Hardy, “Injunctions”, XXXV, 433. 
506 12 pennies is equivalent to one shilling. There were 20 shillings to the pound, so fine for recusancy increased by a multiple of 33 times.
people to the Catholic faith and “subverting their allegiance from [Elizabeth].” The Council ordered the justices to search houses of those suspected to be housing the said Mass and priests, arrest individuals, and seize any mass books found. A 1580 letter from the Privy Council to the sheriff of Lincolnshire similarly admonished the county for the many recusants who “forbeare to come to their parishe churches and conforme themselves in matters of Religion according to the laws, but also secretlie have used other Popishe service.” Besides the affront to religious conformity, these Catholics “sought to allure and pervert her Majesties good and well disposed subjects in those partes.” Conversion of the local community and illegal private worship were acts of treason against the state, not just acts of religious subversion.

Despite the label of treason and active persecution from local authorities in the form of arrests and house searches, many Catholics continued to host Mass in private households. Such clandestine worship in unconsecrated space necessitated an adaptive and unorthodox view of religious space in order to accommodate the sacred and highly ritualistic service. Kaplan’s work on house and embassy chapels exemplifies how spatial analysis can depart from mere description of space to an understanding of the meaning found and constructed within space, as shown in his discussion of the façade of privacy enjoyed by Dutch Catholics. As noted by the brief discussion of legislation above, English Catholic houses enjoyed a limited privacy from authorities, even if fictional. Local magistrates frequently accosted the space, searches were carried out, people were arrested, items were taken, people were executed, and underground networks and communities of Catholics were rooted out. As a result, the history of post-Reformation English Catholic survival has focused on the adaptability of religious space amidst this necessity for complete

507 Letter from the Privy Council, Hatfield, Sept. 5, 1578, at Surry History Center, Z/407/MSLb. 220: (Z/407/2).
508 Recusants in Lincolnshire, June 26, 1580, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/13 f.59.
seclusion. Lisa McClain has argued that Catholics transformed houses, prisons, and even execution sites into sites for worship, education, catechization, and conversion through the separation and reconceptualization of space. English Catholics used and thereby transformed ordinary space into sacred space through physical separation from Protestants, ritualized actions performed within ordinary space, and interactions between peoples that created a religious community. Peter Davidson has argued that these Catholic spaces were encoded with symbols recognized by other Catholics, creating a sense of unity through houses, architecture, inscriptions, and paintings. Images featuring Constantine or tears of blood within the space, for example, were symbols that declared an allegiance to an ancient church and separated that space from adherence to Protestantism. In this way, Davidson has shown that space could articulate allegiance at the same time as disloyalty, thereby creating community for those who understood the symbolism.

In the past two decades, these works and others have shown English Catholic clandestine space to be porous, complex, adaptive, and symbolic in order to sustain a minority religious community against the onslaught of Protestant legislation. Since the household was a prominent space in which Catholics would gather in secret, it is no surprise that gender has accompanied such discussions, since the house was generally considered a feminine domain.

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511 All of these recent studies on the dynamic, changing, and adaptable nature of space, dependent on the people and social structures that interacted with it, benefits from the work of Henri Lefebvre. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 73.
Frances Dolan surmises, “The suppression of the Mass (except in the royal or embassy chapels in London), and the hunting of priests as felons, meant that clandestine observance at home – often motivated and fostered by women – was the only option for most Catholics.”

For Dolan, gender unites the spatial paradigms presented by Henri Lefebvre’s work on social space. She writes, “Gender connected the material and discursive, the physical and ideological, the experienced and the imagined.” The Reformation presented opportunities for Catholics to create a “counter-public sphere”, mostly in the household, where women had a particular agency. She argues that the gendered division of space saw women running households while men conformed in the public sphere. Such agency was not limited to Catholics in Reformed countries. Instead, a larger pattern exists between female agency in the household and religious persecution. Resistance and religious preservation within private domestic space has recently become a topic outside of England, particularly amidst the Moriscos in sixteenth-century Spain. Mary Elizabeth Perry found that many Morisco women transformed households into spaces of resistance by facilitating Muslim rituals and prayers and teaching children to do the same.

This chapter builds on previous analyses of female domestic activity; however, it considers how marital status, along with gender, influenced the control, authority, and use of such space. Widowhood brought a specific sort of agency with their economic, social, and

oftentimes religious authority, through which they could redefine space for their particular use. While previous histories have focused on the ways Catholics adapted and used space, this analysis examines how the people who owned and facilitated space influenced the meaning, definition, and thereby use of the space. Such a gendered analysis, contingent on marital status, is one element missing from Kaplan, Dolan, Davidson, and others, as it considers how widowhood in particular could manipulate and redefine space through social structures and stereotypes, both inside the house and outside in the local community.

**Widowhood and the Manipulation of Household Space**

The semi-public nature of household mass, a ritual that required privacy and the creation of community, nicely intertwined with the lifestyle of widowhood – a demographic marginalized in society, encumbered with cultural stereotypes, autonomous both socially and economically, yet oftentimes connected through marriages, children, and decades of networking. The following analysis will focus on the lives of Anne Howard, Lady Magdalen Montague, and Dorothy Lawson, with scatterings of supplemental examples of Catholic widows, to highlight how social, cultural, and economic opportunities inherent in widowhood manipulated the threshold of the house in a way that was useful for providing Mass for the community. Due to these unique opportunities, it is not surprising that widows in post-Reformation England ran some of the most well known Catholic centers. Widows’ houses could be solitary for privacy and protection, yet

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517 An argument made by Craig regarding women in “Space, Order, and Resistance,” 182, but could more easily be applied to widows specifically.
public within the clandestine Catholic community in a controlled fashion. This semi-public space was also adaptable, transforming from household to pseudo-Cathedral as Catholics cognitively redefined the space, adaptively used rooms and materials, and interacted with people within it. After an introduction to the historical and historiographical transformations of sacred space in post-Reformation England, the section will examine four common characteristics of widows’ houses used to host Mass – solitary, connected, adaptable, and controlled. Each characteristic was vital for the successful maintenance of a Catholic household and was contingent on the widows’ gender and marital status.

Before the Reformation, Catholic sacred space was controlled and created through consecration and the presence of sacred objects. Such sacred space clearly demarcated a divide between that which was holy and that which was not. The Church created spaces for public worship that were sacred, whether it was in a Cathedral or in the landscape at a pilgrimage site. Annabel Ricketts considered the presence and control over sacred space, enacted by the Church, as a stamp of authority on the physical world. The clear separation between the right place of worship and the temporal realm allowed for the control of worship in the pre-Reformation age. The upheaval of the Reformation resulted in acts of iconoclasm and drastic overhauls of public worship space in England that redefined the meaning of sacred space for Catholics. New Protestant ideas rejected the sacredness of specific places as a direct attack on Catholic conceptions of holy sites, including those featured in pilgrimages, locations with holy

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relics, and even the requirement to consecrate space in order to administer sacraments. Many Protestants denied that space had sanctity, a notion that directly attacked centuries of ritual under the Catholic Church. John Calvin wrote in his *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church*:

Christ abolished all distinction of places, when he said ‘The hour cometh, when not at this mountain, or Jerusalem, but everywhere shall the true worshippers worship God in spirit and in truth,’ (John iv. 21, 23.)

Worship was no less valid in a forest than in a parish church, since Protestant ideas of space disregarded all elevation of space as popish and idolatrous. Thomas Bell, a one-time Catholic priest turned Protestant polemicist criticized in his *Survey of Popery*, published in London in 1596, that “Gods people of late yeres have beene wonderfully seduced” by idolatry associated with objects and the landscape. Catholics were “addicted to sundry kinds of superstition,” and were under the “false perswasion of the papists; who taught them to merite their salvation by gadding on pilgrimage, to visit stocks, stones, and dead mens bones.” Due to these ideological and legal attacks, English Catholics had to adapt, and according to Frances Dolan, they had to transition into a more fluid and adaptive relation to space. At times, this meant searching for new places of worship, most prominently utilizing rooms within Catholic households.

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However, in the eyes of Rome, domestic space was no longer considered appropriate for the administration of the sacraments according to the Council of Trent, yet for English Catholics a compromise had to be made, signaling the adaptability and flexibility of orthodoxy. The Council of Trent banned the celebration of the holy sacrament in private houses, arguing that the act required a place of dignity and majesty. Yet the penal laws of Elizabethan England forced practicing Catholics into an underground community, one which sustained itself through household space for worship. The Jesuit Robert Southwell encouraged Catholics to set apart rooms in the household as a chapel or church, consecrating each in their own mind, even if the architecture or materials within the space stayed the same. In this way, the consecration of sacred space was more a matter of the mind and imagination. In this way, Catholics turned domestic space into religious space, both through a reconceptualization of this space as sacred and through the actions and interactions within it. The movement of ritual behind closed doors was an attempt to keep Catholics safe and private, yet as Frances Dolan has found, “Catholic homes were neither safe nor private. The “private” space of the Catholic house, with its pockets of even greater privacy – its curtained beds, priest holes, and portable altars – was open to scrutiny from within and without.” Servants, neighbors, or even those who attended Mass could draw the attention of magistrates, either purposefully or unintentionally, bringing house searches, arrests, and executions in their wake. While the notion of a household exudes an assumption and degree

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527 Robert Southwell wrote about imagining rooms of the house as dedicated to a saint in his *A Shorte Rule of good lyfe*, York Mister Library, Add. MS 151, fols. 34v-35v, as quoted by Lisa McClain, “Without Church, Cathedral or Shrine,” 384.
528 McClain, “Without Church, Cathedral or Shrine,” 386.
of privacy, the house was also shared space.⁵³⁰ The semi-private nature of the household made it the central location for the protection and promotion of Catholic worship since the space combined the notion of domestic privacy with the opportunity for public hospitality.

There was one particular space that facilitated the use of the household as a semi-public forum – the threshold. The entry, doorway, or even the courtyard approaching the door both protected and facilitated interactions with the outside world.⁵³¹ As Willem Frijhoff argues, the threshold is an area situated between “public space governed by laws and private space where conscience reigns.”⁵³² Anthropologist Arnold van Gennep discussed thresholds as a portal for rites of passage, including rites of purification (washing, doorposts bathed in blood, purification with water or perfume, etc.) or incorporation rites (presentation of a meal, etc.).⁵³³ He stated, “The portal which symbolizes a taboo against entering becomes the postern of the ramparts, the gate in the walls of the city quarter, the door of the house…Precisely: the door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling…therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world.”⁵³⁴ Van Gennep’s discussion of the liminality of the threshold has translated into literary and historical studies that consider the role, use, and placement of a threshold as a unique boundary between public and private space, particularly for women.⁵³⁵ Laura Gowing’s work on early modern sexual insults proposes that women who stood

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⁵³⁴ Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, 20.
⁵³⁵ Lena Cowen Orlin, “Women on the Threshold,” Shakespeare Studies 25 (1997): 52. Even today in the United States, the threshold remains a liminal space in the eyes of the law. The Fourth Amendment protects the private space within a household without a warrant, unless evidence is in plain sight through an open door or window from a public space (i.e. roadway or sidewalk). United States privacy laws dictate that the threshold remains a neutral space where a person maintains a reasonable right to privacy. Yet, the vague nature of this liminal space continues to
at the threshold and delivered or overheard such insults occupied a liminal position as being both at home and participating in a public sphere. For Gowing, the threshold was a vital location that strengthened women’s position both in the household and in the local community.

While Gowing discussed the threshold as a vantage point of the public from the private, this chapter proposes that the threshold, for widows, carried with it additional forms of power and protection. The cultural stereotypes and legal structures associated with widows’ doorways, in some instances, created a shelter from the Protestant searchers outside, while promoting hospitality, charity, and clandestine worship to trusted members of the community within. The restrictions experienced by English Catholics stimulated the use of wealthy households as centers of religious preservation and practice; however, previous studies have focused primarily on the role of the male gentry. Yet, in the past few decades, studies have begun to highlight and argue for the role of women in facilitating clandestine domestic worship. In 1980, Hugh Aveling postulated that of the three hundred Catholic households in Yorkshire during the reign of Elizabeth, no less than two hundred were considered matriarchal. That is, “the ruling Catholic influence was feminine.” Yet, what has largely escaped the notice of historians is the overwhelming presence of widows as heads of such households – a state in the female life cycle that afforded the most autonomy and power to women. For example, in Walsham’s analysis of

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537 Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 98.
Catholic households, of the six discussed, half are maintained by widows. Two of the most famous Catholic households were Battle in East Sussex, deemed “little Rome”, and St. Antony’s in Newcastle. Widows Lady Magdalen Montague and Dorothy Lawson, respectively, ran each. Therefore, it is the purpose of this section, to understand how widowhood influenced this predominantly female exploit of the clandestine Catholic community. It seeks to answer how gender, economic autonomy, social independence, and cultural stereotypes of the owner of households influenced the meaning and use of that space for clandestine Mass, and the way this influenced the interactions of Catholics within that space. This study is not focused on how Catholic ritual adapted and changed under penal laws. Instead, it seeks to uncover a gendered manipulation of space, specifically how a common space used to practice secret Catholic ritual and the threshold protecting treasonous actions within, was adapted and converted by the marital status and gender of its owner. It is about the power of gendered stereotypes in society, about how social, economic, and cultural structures could transfer to space, and create a coverture of protection from outside authorities based on the identity of widows who ran Catholic households.

Of course, widows were not the only individuals to host Mass. There are a number of examples of male gentry who harbored priests and hosted Mass, even men who attended Protestant service, while having Mass at home for their wives. In addition, there are examples of wives who worked to secretly provide for and host Mass with or without the knowledge of their husbands. However, widows do frequently appear in correspondence and state papers

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540 Widow households include those of Lady Magdalen Montague, Elizabeth Vaux, and Dorothy Lawson. Walsham, “Translating Trent?” 297-98.
541 For example, see a list of such men in Names of the recusants within the county of Lancastor, 1584, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/175 f. 32.
542 Lady Walgrave, the wife of Sir William of Smalbridge, hosted a priest who said Mass while her husband was absent. Anthony Tyrell’s Answer to the Articles, August 31, 1586, at the National Archives, London, SP 53/19 f. 643.
between Protestant authorities that discuss the underground Catholic network, clandestine Mass, and the harboring of priests. For example, a 1580 letter from the bishop of Salisbury to leading Protestants in Berkshire recommended that the household of a widow named Mrs. Weekes should be searched for massing priests and individuals who attended Mass.\textsuperscript{543} Similarly, in 1580, a letter to magistrates ordered certain individuals to search Lady Tregonelle’s house, a place of “great disorder”, where she harbored priests and hosted Mass.\textsuperscript{544} Famed priest-hunter Richard Topcliffe’s notes discussed the celebration of Mass at Lady Vaux’s lodging at St. Mary Overies in February 1582.\textsuperscript{545} More than likely, this was in reference to the widow, Mary Vaux, who took up lodgings in the house of Francis Browne and harbored priests, hosted Mass, and allowed the presence of a Catholic printing press.\textsuperscript{546} A letter from 1591 recounted the questioning of a man named Palmer in Leicestershire regarding a priest found saying Mass within his house. Palmer denied all knowledge of this service and blamed his widowed sister who had taken up residence at his house.\textsuperscript{547} The confession of priest Anthony Sherlock includes the names of numerous houses where he stayed and performed Mass, four of whom were widows.\textsuperscript{548}

This brief discussion of a few letters reveals the presence of widows as facilitators of clandestine Mass in households, most often in households they owned and managed. Yet the source base of correspondence between Protestant authorities limits the analysis to widows who

\textsuperscript{543} \textit{26 September}, 1580, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/13 f. 187.
\textsuperscript{544} \textit{10 Juniij}, 1580, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/13 f. 43.
\textsuperscript{545} \textit{Mr. Topclyffe’s note of particulars against William Deane and Edward Osborne}, Feb. 1582, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/152 f. 97.
\textsuperscript{547} [\textit{Thos. Phelippes to Thos. Barnes}], March 22 1591, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/238 f. 118.
were caught in their exploits. Additional sources, such as contemporary biographies of widows, while hagiographic in nature, shed light on those who succeeded in promoting Catholicism in their community away from the watchful eye of authorities. The lives of Lady Magdalen Montague, Anne Howard, and Dorothy Lawson show that widows could manipulate household structures and use in ways that helped to assist the clandestine practice of household Mass. Catholics gathered in households to, among other things, pray, partake in the sacrament, listen to a priest, celebrate Mass, possibly step out in an overt and political way against the state, separate themselves from Protestants both ritually and spatially, and create a community of likeminded religious individuals. To accomplish these goals, a number of features were necessary for Catholic widows’ households. The first necessity was the creation of a private, secluded, and solitary space that could protect the actions within.

_Solitary Space_

Widowhood resulted in solitude, both socially and economically, which was a disadvantage for some, but an advantage for others. For the Catholic widows of this study who desired to live a religious life after the death of their husband, this solitude suited their purposes. Culturally, early modern women were expected to put their husbands’ needs above their own, working as late-sixteenth century author Robert Burton wrote, ‘for his health, for his credit, for his wealth, for his happiness in his estate more then for her selfe.’ Upon widowhood, women had a newfound sense of liberty, which often translated into opportunities to dedicate themselves to their children or their community. For women like Dorothy Lawson, the death of her husband instilled “an earnest desire to be like a solitary turtle in the desert and soaring above her

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self with new wings of contemplation, to make her point in religious solitude,” as stated by her biographer, William Palmes.\footnote{William Palmes, \textit{The Life of Mrs. Dorothy Lawson of St. Antony’s Near Newcastle-on-Tyne} (London: Charles Dolman, 1855), 36.} Anne Howard desired to imitate the widow Anna from the book of Luke, who “never departed out of the Temple, serving God therin day and night in prayer and fasting.”\footnote{\textit{The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, and of Anne Dacres, his wife}, edited from the original manuscript by The Duke of Norfolk, E.M. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857), 202. Anna was a prophetess who lived as a widow for more than forty years and spent her days in the temple. She is featured in the second chapter of Luke as the woman who met Jesus when Mary and Joseph presented him in the temple. Luke 2: 36-38.} The biographer of Lady Magdalen Montague similarly compared the widow to Anna, further signifying that widowhood presented an opportunity for various forms of solitude – mental, physical, social, and religious.\footnote{Smith, \textit{Elizabethan Recusant} House, 48.} These women and others in this study chose to remain in marital solitude in order to live a religious life, and this desire was accompanied by the creation of solitary households within which they could live out the rest of their days in service to God. Their social solitude translated into solitary spaces, some of which became the most influential Catholic centers in post-Reformation England.

Dorothy Lawson’s social and economic independence led to the creation of her house at St. Antony’s in Newcastle, an often-cited example of female agency and strength in the Catholic community.\footnote{For example, see Sister Joseph Damien Hanlon, “These Be But Women”; Hugh Aveling, “Catholic Households in Yorkshire”; Christine Newman, “The Role of Women in Early Yorkshire Recusancy: A Reappraisal,” \textit{Northern Catholic History} 30 (1989): 6-16; and Sarah Bastow, “‘Worth Nothing, but very Wilful’: Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536-1642,” \textit{Recusant History} 25, 4 (October 2001): 591-603.} Lawson harbored priests, hosted Mass, and catered to the poor in her community, and these exploits occurred predominantly during her time as a widow. Comparing her life while married to the Protestant Roger Lawson with her actions as a widow illustrates the ways marital status influenced both a woman’s role in a religious community and the space within which she cultivated her agency. Almost immediately after arriving at Brough Hall following the wedding, Dorothy requested a chaplain from her mother-in-law. At this time, the Lawsons were Protestant;
however, they allowed Dorothy to find a Jesuit chaplain on her own. She maintained the Jesuit Richard Holtby in one of her three lodgings in the house. In 1605, Roger and Dorothy Lawson left Brough for Heton in Northumberland. Roger’s frequent trips to London left the household maintenance to Dorothy, whose “prime intentions were to prepare a house for God.”\textsuperscript{555} As a Catholic married to a Protestant working in the public sphere as a lawyer, Lawson’s creation of a Catholic household had to be discrete. She hired Catholic servants “little by little, hiering one after another, and never two att once, that her husband, between jest and earnest, tould her, his family was become Papists ere he perceived it.”\textsuperscript{556} Dorothy snuck a priest into the house at night “and lodged him in a chamber, which to avoid suspicion, was appointed by grant from her husband only for the children to say their prayers.”\textsuperscript{557} Her duty to honor and obey her husband limited her actions to create a Catholic household. While she did secretly maintain a priest, slowly hire Catholic servants, and provide a priest for her children’s prayers, these actions pale in comparison to her agency as a widow.

After Roger Lawson died of an unknown sickness in 1614, Dorothy immediately invited a Jesuit by the name of Legard to live with her in her house at Heaton. Her biographer states that her intent and desire was to live in religious solitude, but her confessor encouraged her to “be more advantageous for his glory…to persever as she had begun, not only in the study of her own perfection, but also in the pursuance and acquisition of others.”\textsuperscript{558} The room she previously destined for her children’s prayers became a chapel where the priest could celebrate daily Mass while she worked to reorganize her house as a Catholic center for her children and servants. Soon after her husband’s death, Lawson was encouraged by her father-in-law to sell Heaton in

\textsuperscript{555} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 19.
\textsuperscript{556} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{557} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 20.
\textsuperscript{558} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 36.
favor of a plot of land on the banks of the Tyne. Here, Lawson built a new house large enough to house her many children, to be a place for local Mass, and to be a Jesuit headquarters for annual meetings and refuge.  

The location of the large house was unique in that it sat on the banks of the Tyne for ease of access, yet it was located around a sweeping bend of the river to ensure privacy. This location as a natural space removed from prying eyes was one of the reasons Lawson chose St. Antony’s for her house. According to her biographer, the goal of her new house was to ensure privacy while encouraging visits from local Catholics. The house would be more private than Heton, yet accessible for people to attend her chapel. Not only was it secluded, but St. Antony’s also sat on a place already considered holy, dedicated during Catholic times to St. Antony. Previously, a picture of the saint had been placed in a tree near the river to comfort traveling seamen.

In-law relations, inheritance, and economic necessity, all motivated by her widowhood, drove Lawson to move to St. Antony’s at the request of her father-in-law. Her relationship with Jesuit priests defined the purpose of her house to be a refuge and site for her community’s conversion, and her freedom of mind and action allowed her to apply herself for the sole purpose of creating a religious community. With no husband or male authority constricting her


Right Rev. Monsignor Provost Consitt, On the Tyne in 1620 and Mrs. Dorothy Lawson (Newcastle on Tyne: T. Fordyce, Printer, 1883), 7. Durham University Library, PamXL 942.82 CON.

Alexandra Walsham has examined how the natural landscape was both a “focus and a forum” for popular religious practices in both pre- and post-Reformation Britain and Ireland. Lawson’s use of the landscape in her positioning of St. Antony’s, together with the location of other widows’ houses amidst trees and natural barriers, suggests that the bends of a river or coverture of forests could also be a facilitator of clandestine religious practices. Walsham, Reformation of the Landscape, 531.

Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 30.

Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 30.
movements, Lawson’s solitude contributed towards her creation of a vital Catholic center for
Newcastle. The freedoms associated with widowhood changed Lawson’s actions as a married
woman ushering in a priest by the cover of night to the owner and maintainer of a grand Jesuit
headquarter. St. Antony’s location on a river hidden around a bend in the north of England elicits
images of solitude and devout piety, two characteristics reminiscent of widowhood as a social
status in early modern England. In this way, marital status and gender defined the meaning and
use of space in a tangible way.

Dorothy Lawson was not the only widow to retire to a solitary location following the
death of her husband. The very notion of dower houses as locations set apart from the main
house on an estate mimic the cultural and social separation of widows from society. Lady Cecily
Stonor retreated to the smaller house of Stonor Lodge following the death of Sir Francis Stonor
in 1570. Her house became a base for the work of Father William Morris and Father William
Hartley. After Sir John Arundell’s death in 1591, Lady Arundell moved her household from
London to a castle in Chideock, where she lived with her daughter and three priests. The physical
removal of Arundell’s household from the metropolis to a large castle in Dorset facilitated the
ability of Lady Arundell to host Mass for local Catholics. Distance from London, together with
the structure of the moated castle, provided protection and produced a clandestine community.
However, in Lady Arundell’s case, protection provided by geography did not save her from
untrustworthy servants within, a dangerous vulnerability in Catholic households to be discussed
later. William Holmes betrayed the house in 1594, which led to the search and arrest of many in
the household, and the execution of four individuals, including the priest John Cornelius and
servants to the castle John Carey and Patrick Salmon. Both Lady Arundell and her daughter

564 Connelly, Women of the Catholic Resistance, 40.
escaped punishment. Anne Howard, the widow of the now sainted Philip Howard, moved four times between 1616 and her death in 1630. She spent her final two years at a secluded manor house at Shifnal, Shropshire, more than 100 miles away from London. In this house covered by trees, Anne hosted Mass, kept priests, and provided charity to the poor. A surviving map of Shifnal Manor, drawn in 1635 five years after Howard’s death, shows a walled house with a large tree grove to the west. Both the walls and trees would have provided protection from potential eyewitnesses of Catholic people and practices (Figure 4.1). The widow Lady Magdalen Montague had control of three houses upon her widowhood, Montague House in London, Cowdray House in West Sussex, and Battle Abbey in East Sussex. She spent the majority of her time in East Sussex at Battle, the house furthest from London and protected by rolling hills and trees. While Montague’s house in London was searched numerous times by authorities, her house at Battle was searched once, and she lived in relative peace and seclusion despite the fact that her house was known as “little Rome.” Here, in the house four miles from Hastings, Montague built a chapel, kept three priests, hosted Mass, and served the poor.

The houses of Dorothy Lawson, Lady Arundell, Anne Howard, and Lady Magdalen Montague were famed pillars of Catholicism in their respective communities. When examining the actions of each widow, it becomes evident that there is a pattern of withdrawal from London to a solitary place, where each Catholic widow could create or transform their domestic space into centers of Catholicism. The fate of the widow Anne Line provides a clear contrast to this

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566 Anne Howard’s biographer states that he stayed with Anne for fourteen years and comments that she moved four times during his stay with her household. Thus, from 1616 to 1630, Anne moved four times. Lives, 202, 209.
567 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 41-42, 55.
pattern. The Jesuit John Gerard put Line in charge of a house in London as a refuge for priests and location for Catholic Mass. Line allowed too many to attend Mass and subsequently garnered notice from the authorities. Line’s house was searched; she was arrested, and executed in 1601.  

With a few exceptions, a pattern arises when comparing the location of households of Catholic widows. Figure 4.2 illustrates the locations of the houses of thirteen widows who harbored priests or hosted Mass in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England. Those widows arrested, imprisoned, or executed for such treasonous actions lived within sixty miles of London, with the exception of Eleanor Hunt whose house in North Yorkshire was searched, resulting in her arrest and the execution of the priest Christopher Wharton. The widows whose households stood a greater distance from London in solitary locations either avoided detection, or in Eleanor Brooksby’s case, successfully hid priests during a search. The exception is Lady Magdalen Montague, whose house was less than fifty miles from London, yet her special relationship with the crown and Sir Julius Caesar provided a personal veil of coverture for her actions. It seems a space removed from London in a secluded location—with constructed walls, tree groves, or river bends—was essential for a protected space for Catholic Mass.

*Connected Space*

While space set apart for Mass, and harboring for that matter, had to be solitary and protected from the eyes of authorities, in a contradictory fashion it also had to be connected to local Catholics in order to create and maintain attendance at Mass. If the household was too far off of the beaten path, its location could impede both authorities and loyal worshippers. In this sense, the structure and location of a household influenced its agency in the Catholic community. The requirement for a semi-public space that felt safe but could accommodate large numbers of

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569 The widows represented on the map were chosen due to their prominence in both primary and secondary sources. Widows briefly mentioned in correspondence or state papers, or widows with unknown locations are not represented here.

570 Chapter 3 discussed the special relationship Lady Magdalen Montague enjoyed with Protestant authorities and the crown.
Figure 4.2: Map of widows’ houses. Star icons represent widows punished (arrested, imprisoned, or executed) for their actions, whereas bubble icons represent widows who avoided detection.

Map data ©2017 Google GeoBasis-DE/BKG.
individuals is perhaps why gentry households, flush with wealth, power, and privilege, were popular locations for local Mass.

The location and use of St. Antony’s was both private and easily accessible. The house sat on the banks of the Tyne River, which provided easy access to merchants and missionaries from the continent. Her biographer William Palmes wrote, “The vast confluence of ships which it brings to Newcastle for coles (and this is looked upon one of the greatest sorts of traffic in the kingdom) pass under the full view of the house, and, notwithstanding, Catholicks may resort thither with such privacy, that they are not exposed to the aspect of any.”

Besides its accessibility from the water and its privacy in location, structural and artistic elements of the house, chosen by Dorothy Lawson, literally called people to worship. She had “Jesus” written in large letters on the end of the house that faced the water, so mariners and missionaries would know that hers was a house where Catholics could gather in privacy. Palmes wrote, “The name of Jesus shee caus’d to be drawn so publick for two reasons. The first, her own safeguard and protection, esteeming herself ever safest under the standard, especially when shee had greatest frequent of priests…The second reason, that sea-fairing men of other nations might know it to be a Catholick house, and fly thither, as truly they did in swarmes for their spirituall reflection.”

The external façade of the house was fashioned in a way to draw in and create a community of believers. Peter Davidson has examined houses and chapels in England that

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571 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 31.
573 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 31. While the name “Jesus” is of course not isolated to Catholic use, Palmes maintained that other Catholics would understand it to be a sign of a Catholic house. There is an assumption here of a secretly shared culture with symbols.
displayed traces of a recusant Catholic identity in either the layout or interior of the structure. He argues that the houses of the Treshams, Stonors, and Hudlestons were symbolically articulated spaces that revealed an adherence to Catholicism and a rejection of Protestant nationalism. Similarly, Lawson’s carving of “Jesus” facing the water was a symbolic gesture that invited Catholics into her house, it was believed to have ritually protected the house, and it stamped the intent of the house for Catholic use.

574 Peter Davidson, “Recusant Catholic Spaces,” 22.
Figure 4.4: Remains of Dorothy Lawson’s House, St. Antony’s, Newcastle, England.
Demolished in 1934.
Photo Credit: North Yorkshire County Council, ZRL 13/4/6.
Spatial analyses of households that examine the structure, rooms, and design are important to understand how space itself was fashioned for religious purposes. Yet, a complete focus on the material excludes the immaterial. The people who interacted within these places, attended Mass, and created meaning in these spaces must be examined in conjunction with layout and location. The underground English Catholic network consisted of Catholics who sustained their faith through private worship in domestic households. Priests were not the only Catholics to move around the country seeking refuge. Lay Catholics frequently moved household to household in groups or as families, oftentimes attending Mass in one household for weeks, or even years. The early modern household by nature was a center for family, childhood education, business, and hospitality – the latter a perfect companion for individuals clandestinely visiting households for Mass. A 1593 letter from Anthony Atkinson to William Cecil informs on the proliferation of priests, Catholics, and individuals who attended Mass in the north of England, particularly in Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire. Individuals charged with attending Mass included gentlemen, wives, daughters, sisters, and kinsmen, maids, servants, tenants, and friends of various individuals who harbored or hosted Mass in the household.⁵⁷⁵ This vast network of Catholics attending Mass was not isolated to the north of England where distance from Elizabeth I and her Privy Council provided a sort of geographic protection. An undated document in the Bodleian Library lists 96 people seized during Mass in London. Included are gentry, working class, a grocer, tailor, butcher, apothecary, and numerous maids.

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There were men, women, children, wives, widows, even a family listed including a man named Thomas Briskett, together with his wife, son, and maid.\textsuperscript{576}

Catholics who attended clandestine Mass represented a variety of social statuses, occupations, ages, and genders. This unique grouping of people required a space where they could gather without arousing suspicion. Inns could accommodate a variety of demographics, yet there were seldom spaces large enough or private enough to elude the notice of local magistrates or Protestants. Catholics could and did gather within the natural landscape for worship. They traveled to demolished sacred sites and promoted pilgrimage to famous shrines on the continent.\textsuperscript{577} Yet worship in the natural landscape lacked sanctity or consecration for the performance of the Mass, and Protestants could easily observe their rituals. Households were private and permeable, hospitable to outsiders, welcoming for kin and friends, and open for business appointments between wide varieties of demographics. The very nature of households as semi-public spheres both promoted and protected clandestine meetings and worship. Households run by widows added yet another layer of advantages. Wealthy widows had economic independence, a household under their control, and vast networks of kin and friends with which they could protect themselves.\textsuperscript{578}

Consider Lady Magdalen Montague’s vast network. While at Battle, she maintained more than 80 kin and servants in the household, many of whom were Catholics.\textsuperscript{579} The chapel built to

\textsuperscript{576} List of 96 persons, being apparently Roman Catholics living in London who were seized at mass, no date, at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Rawl D. 399 f.95.

\textsuperscript{577} See Alexandra Walsham, The Reformation of the Landscape.

\textsuperscript{578} A number of widows in this study were well connected through kin or friendships. Lady Magdalen Montague was the aunt of Anne Howard. In fact, Montague visited Anne following the death of Philip Howard to caution her not to make a vow of chastity lightly, Lives, 176, 198. According to Palmes’ biography of Dorothy Lawson, Dorothy was able to procure a priest for her husband on his deathbed within a day while visiting London, even though she lived in Newcastle, almost 250 miles away from London, Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 22. These women seem to be well connected to a vast network of Catholics across England, even to each other.

\textsuperscript{579} Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 41.
accommodate Mass was large enough to accommodate Catholics from the local community as well. Her biographer writes, “Such was the number of Catholics resident in her house and the multitude and note of such as repaired thither, that even the heretics, to the eternal glory of the name of the Lady Magdalen, gave it the title of Little Rome.” Lady Magdalen had an open-door policy for Mass in her house, as “she hindered none from hearing Mass in her house, if any Catholic had but the least knowledge of them, using these words: ‘Let these poor people come; they desire comfort as much as we.'” Lady Magdalen’s intentional use of her large chapel for worship and inclusion of kin, household staff, and any Catholic from the surrounding community testifies both to the vast network of diverse individuals connected to the wealthy widow, and to the impact her unique space could have on the community. Her conceptualization of her house and chapel as an open place for all Catholics is different from a house used for the intent to harbor priests – an act that was exclusive and secret versus public and inclusive.

Magdalen’s connections through kin, friendships, neighbors, and decades of networking as a noble and member of court cast a wide net and drew in a large religious community surrounding Battle. The large congregation did not escape the notice of authorities, yet Magdalen curiously remained unmolested. The years in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot saw a heightened anxiety on the part of local magistrates towards her house, and led to a few house searches. However, Montague was able to obtain a letter from the King’s Council, dated April 5, 1606 that stipulated that only four individuals, nominated by her, were allowed to search her house. Her biographer, Richard Smith states, “By which letters she obtained that herself, whose house especially was always free to all Catholics, and who in admitting Catholics to the

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580 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 43.
581 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 44.
sacraments exposed herself to danger more than all others, proved thenceforward to be more free
from peril than anyone else."582 Her ability to choose her searchers was unprecedented, as was
the protection she enjoyed from the King’s Council the following year. A 1607 letter written to
the attorney general from the King’s Council stated:

For so much (say they) as the Lady Montague, the wife of Antony Viscount
Montague deceased, is lately called in question for default of conformity in
religion according to the laws of this Kingdom, in regard that she is a
noblewoman, aged, and by reason of her fidelity in the time of Queen Elizabeth
was never called in question, it pleaseth the King’s Majesty that in her old years
she be free from molestation. These, therefore, shall be to require you that you
forthwith do procure the accusation which is presented against her in the County
of Sussex or elsewhere to be removed by writ of certiorari into His Majesty’s
Court of the King’s Bench, and thereby you shall have power to stay all process
against her person grounded upon that presentment, or whatsoever other, till we
shall be further certified.583

Montague’s protection from harsh penalties was unique to her gender, age, and situation when
compared to the treatment of other members of her family. In 1609, just two years after the
previous letter, her grandson Anthony Maria Brown was placed under house arrest for
maintaining a large number of Catholics in his house.584 By opening her house to local Catholics,
Montague invited scrutiny, house searches, and temptations of betrayal from disloyal servants.

Yet her gender, age, marital status, and history of respect and loyalty to the crown covered her
treasonous actions and left her protected from penal laws. No doubt, the fact that Montague
maintained a close relationship with her godson, Sir Julius Caesar, Lord Chancellor of the
Exchequer and man responsible for rounding up recusants, influenced her treatment from the
Council. Montague’s connections gathered a number of Catholics around her to enjoy the space

582 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 55.
583 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 54. Smith claims that this quote was in a public letter written by the King’s
Council and addressed to the Attorney General, dated 19 April 1607. I have yet to find such a letter. Smith claims
that the original was in his possession at the time of writing the biography.
584 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 85.
she set apart from Protestant spaces of worship, and these same connections provided a coverture of protection over her house and actions. Both the creation of the space and the connections that contributed to the use of such space were contingent on her status, gender, and widowhood.

There are further examples of widows who used the economic and social structures that accompanied widowhood in order to create an accessible Catholic network. Widows such as Anne Howard desired to live a life religious following the death of their husbands to the point that they set up a religious community in their own household, encouraging all within it to attend services and live for God. Her biographer wrote:

> Upon those days in which she receiv’d the most Blessed Sacrament she spent much more time in the Chappell partly in preparation before, partly in thanksgiving after communion, the which she judging requisite to be done very leisurely not only did so her self, but also desired that all others shou’d do the same; in so much that if she saw any of her own servants or others over whom she had authority, going away soon after receiving she would reprehend them for it, and sometimes sending for them back again commanded them to stay longer to give God thanks for so great a benefit.⁵⁸⁵

According to the biography, many servants attended service just to please Howard, leading to numerous conversions. Howard’s control over the household – a gendered structure of early modern society – assisted her in controlling the actions and faith of those under her employment.

The underground Catholic network interacted in households, signifying the connectivity provided by housing clandestine Catholic worship in spaces that by nature encouraged hospitality. Domestic spaces were not only connected to Catholics due to their location, ease of access, or size of space, but also they were connected through people. Catholic widows like Dorothy Lawson, Magdalen Montage, and Anne Howard took advantage of the kinship relations, household servants, and friendships to create spaces of connection, worship, and networking.

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⁵⁸⁵ *Lives*, 205.
through not only their choice of location or the bricks and mortar of their households, but also through relationships shaped by a common goal and shared faith. The wealth, social status, gender, and family connections of these widows provided coverture. As heads of the household, they could create and maintain a religious community within the household that was under their sole charge and be intentional with their use of space, as they had no one to keep accountable to as they worked to promote Catholicism.

*Adaptable Space*

The households of Dorothy Lawson, Anne Howard, Lady Magdalen Montague, and others were not only secluded and accessible to trusted Catholics, but also they were adaptable in use, taking the form of homes, places of business, chapels, private sanctuaries, schools, meeting places, and religious houses based on the use of both the rooms and the materials within. Besides walls, rooms, and material culture, the transition of a building from house to cathedral required Catholics to cognitively redefine and attribute various meanings to household space. Patterns of cognitive meaning can be traced across the households of a number of widows, and each household’s adaptability in meaning and definition was contingent on the widowed owner in question.

Two patterns emerge when examining the adaptable nature of Catholic widows’ households. First, each widow created a chapel within which the materials and use of space redefined it as a sanctified place of worship, harkening back to Catholic cathedrals of pre-Reformation England and preserving Catholic ritual for the present. The ability to create such lavish spaces set apart from the rest of the household, and symbolically and physically removed from Protestant spaces of worship, relied on the economic and social autonomy of widowhood.

Second, each household abided by a strict structure and schedule, ordered around masses, feast
days, and Catholic services in an attempt to create a cloister reminiscent of female religious houses on the continent. The function of widows’ houses as mixed company cloisters builds on the cultural stereotype that older, unmarried women were to withdraw and spend their time in worship and prayer. Each of these widows accepted, embraced, and propagated this stereotype to the point that they redefined their houses as religious communities.

Each widow’s household in question included a room enshrined as a chapel, complete with vestments and décor, and separated from the secular activities of the household. The chapel Lady Magdalen Montague had built at Battle mirrored in every way possible the cathedrals of England’s Catholic past. It included an altar stone enclosed with rails – an additional layer of sanctity for the celebration of the Mass. Here, priests celebrated Mass with singing and musical instruments. Montague set up a choir for singers and a pulpit for priests in order to “have everything conformable” to expectations for Catholic places of worship. The care Montague took to recreate her house chapel in the image of a Catholic church extended to her procurement of sacred objects. Her biographer recounted an instance when a large marble stoned used in pre-Reformation England as an altar stone, fell on a woman but was easily lifted without harm to her body. Smith writes, “the stone was by commandment of the Lady Magdalen removed into the chapel, consecrated again to divine service, and applied to his former use.”

While penal laws...

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\(^{587}\) Smith, *Elizabethan Recusant House*, 43.

\(^{588}\) Smith, *Elizabethan Recusant House*, 57. Smith also recounts a story of the discovery of the body of a priest in the floor of the family chapel. The body was deemed a miraculous sign for the household because it was found to still be flexible and colored, seeming almost alive. Her biographer states that Magdalen grasped the tongue and noticed it was “fleshly red”, Smith, *Elizabethan Recusant House*, 42. Christopher Highley suggested, “While Smith does not speculate on the meaning of the incident, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions, committed Catholics could have little hesitation in construing the strange discovery as an allegory of their persecuted church in England and of Magdalen’s own role in protecting the Catholic community in her household in “Little Rome.” The priest’s body, mysteriously “bound hard with cords,” suggests the severe restriction sunder which England’s Catholics labor during this time of heresy. The body of Catholic believers, like the individual priest’s body, exists in a liminal state
forced practicing Catholics into the private realm of the household and into “unofficial spaces”, Montague procured objects and created sanctified space in order to preserve access to priests, sacraments, instruction, and a heritage of faith and traditions.\(^{589}\)

With the nickname of “Little Rome”, the chapel at Battle shows how space could be reconceptualized through its use and the materials within. The chapel professed a faith, it preserved the memory of a lost Catholic past, it called people back to Catholicism, built a community and refuge for people of similar beliefs, and it was a center of worship. What was once a simple room in a domestic space, possibly private and subject to secular use, was redefined and recreated into a meaningful sacred space within which mixed company could gather to worship. The chapel was a room physically separate in the house, ritually significant due to the meaning attributed to the space, the actions performed within the space, and the materials used within the space, and it was dedicated for a specific use, much like the pre-Reformation English parish churches.

For Lady Magdalen, the chapel was a sanctified space set apart from any other in the household. While Magdalen could and did pray in the privacy of her own chambers, she made a point to appear in the chapel for services every day, and frequently went into the chapel to pray after dinner. The motion of leaving her chamber and walking to another room in the house in order to pray, when she could do the same ritual in the privacy of her own room, signifies at least two things. First, the chapel was indeed deemed a sanctified place and the walls held special meaning, at least in the mind of Lady Magdalen. Second, she used the ritual of prayer and

\(^{589}\) Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.
attending chapel to set an example of piety for the household. Her biographer writes, “As St. Jerome writeth of St. Lea, ‘She instructed her family more by example than by word’, and with her piety induced all to devotion.”590 The chapel therefore took on the meaning of a sacred space, and a place from which Magdalen could live out her piety in order to call others in the household to do the same.

Similarly, Dorothy Lawson constructed a consecrated room in her house to act as a chapel, an action contingent on the wealth and freedom of action inherent in her widowhood. She

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dedicated the house to St. Michael and St. Antony, while every room of the house, just as Robert Southwell suggested, was dedicated to a particular saint.\textsuperscript{591} The chapel, however, was set apart and consecrated to Mary.\textsuperscript{592} The dedication of rooms to particular saints defined the space as something more than a house. The structure, décor, and materials within the chapel defined the space as sacred. Palmes wrote, “For the composure of her family, or rather externall structure of her spiritual building, shee edify’d with astonishment and mov’d to imitation. Her chappell was neat and rich; the altar stood vested with various habiliments, according to the fashion in Catholick countrys.”\textsuperscript{593} Lawson’s chapel mirrored Catholic churches on the continent and commemorated English Catholic spaces of the past. It was a space for preservation, for worship, and a call for community.

Not only were these constructed or restructured spaces separate and sanctified in the house, these chapels provided a space separate from the required Protestant place of worship at parish churches. As Lisa McClain states, “In the minds of believers, these three types of separation – physical, ritual, and imaginative – erected boundaries between what was Catholic and sacred and what was Protestant.”\textsuperscript{594} Anne Howard’s biographer notes that her domestic chapel was “the only Temple she could go to to serve God in her troublesome days.”\textsuperscript{595} The separation these houses and chapels provided from the outside world and from what they deemed heretical teachings not only protected the clandestine Catholic community from Protestant authorities, but also created a sort of religious order surrounding the household. The all-

\textsuperscript{591} With St. Michael being the archangel in charge of the army of God, and St. Anthony being the father of monastic life, the dedicatory saints embody the purpose of the house – to be a religious household that actively fought penal laws meant to weaken the Catholic faith.
\textsuperscript{592} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 30.
\textsuperscript{593} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 43.
\textsuperscript{594} McClain, “Without Church, Cathedral, or Shrine”, 383.
\textsuperscript{595} \textit{Lives}, 203.
inclusive nature of the household, from private chambers, dining rooms, and a chapel for services meant that the household was a space of separation from the outside community, as a protection from both Protestant authorities and the distractions of the outside world, much like enclosed religious orders. Yet the threshold of the house, maintained by the widow, remained a permeable boundary to trusted Catholics.

The spiritual organization of each household was rigorously enforced amidst kin and servants. The Jesuit Robert Southwell’s *A Short Rule of a Good Life*, written while under the protection of Anne Howard and dedicated to her for her use, outlined a clear model for the organization of a Catholic household. Ellen Macek argues that Anne Howard, Magdalen Montague and Dorothy Lawson all used this work as a guide for the spiritual discipline, organization, and education within their households.\(^596\) It is around these schedules of religious observances, calls for chastity, and rigorous discipline that widows’ houses transformed into permeable cloisters. Each of these Catholic widows took a solemn vow of chastity following the death of their husband, despite the option of remarriage. Anne Howard made a vow of chastity, “yet it was not done rashly nor hastily, but after long and mature deliberation, and with the advice and approbation of her spiritual directors, who knew by sufficient experience that she might do it without danger or prudent fear of not keeping it.”\(^597\) William Palmes writes that Dorothy Lawson passed “the remainder of her life in angellicall chastity” as “she had an earnest desire to be like a solitary turtle in the desert and soaring above her self with new wings of

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596 Macek, “Devout Recusant Women,” 237. A missing chapter from the published version of Anne Howard’s biography, found in a little-known earlier manuscript housed at Arundel Castle Archives, states that *Short Rule of a Good Life* was written by Southwell “at first by him only for her direction, in the observance whereof she was always as carefull and diligent, as others are remisse.” *The Life of Ye Right Honourable & Virtuouse Lady, Ye Lady Anne Late Countesse of Arundell & Surrey*, Arundel Castle Archives Library, 23.

597 Lives, 198.
contemplation, to make her point in religious solitude."\textsuperscript{598} Lady Magdalen Montague had a chance to remarry when Lord Cobahm, “a man of great estate, honour, and authority in the realm, did most earnestly seek her in marriage and offered a very fair dowry.”\textsuperscript{599} Montague turned down his advances, and like Lawson and Howard, decided to take a vow of chastity and never remarry. Her biographer Richard Smith remarked, “This example is not ordinary in England in this so corrupt an age, where sometimes women of honour, after the death of their husbands, not finding others equal to themselves in dignity, do marry even their servants, or men of mean condition.”\textsuperscript{600} As discussed in chapter two, the decision to remain a widow was actually common in early modern England, as found by Barbara Todd’s study of Abingdon.\textsuperscript{601} Todd found that the rate of remarriage declined from 50 percent to 23.6 percent between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. More widows decided to remain single than remarry, and in the case of Dorothy Lawson, Magdalen Montague, and Anne Howard, this decision was coupled with a vow to live the rest of their lives in piety and chastity as if they had taken religious orders.

The mental, physical, and religious solitude embraced by these widows translated into spaces that reflected a life of piety, chastity, and charity. These households included the proper place for the performance of the Mass – a space set apart and sanctified for worship - and they provided a Jesuit or seminary priest to act as a religious authority to ensure proper administration of the sacraments and care for souls. Under the direction of Jesuit and seminary priests, these households offered daily services and prayer in a highly structured household with a central focus on living a religious life, both for the widow herself and for those who desired to attend services in the household. Anne Howard’s house had a strict and structured schedule. She herself

\textsuperscript{598} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 24, 36.
\textsuperscript{599} Smith, \textit{Elizabethan Recusant House}, 32.
\textsuperscript{600} Smith, \textit{Elizabethan Recusant House}, 32.
\textsuperscript{601} Barbara J. Todd, “The Remarrying Widow”, 64.
woke up early and spent time in prayer. Then, she went to the chapel to recite prayers until Mass began at eight o’clock. Mass was said twice a day, evensong at three o’clock, and various points in the day were dedicated to prayer both in the chapel and in solitude. Matins and Lauds were before supper, Litanies at nine, and she spent time in prayer until bed at eleven o’clock.

Her biographer stated that Howard was always one of the first in the chapel for morning Mass, which implies that others attended as well. Her devotion and desire to spend her days emulating a religious life created a space within which others had the freedom and opportunity to do the same in the midst of oppressive penal laws against religious communities. The cultural stereotype that recommended widows live solitary lives in the service and worship of God translated into Catholic domestic centers that catered to each widow’s desire to live a life religious, while catechizing and converting households and surrounding communities.

Dorothy Lawson also made time for private contemplation and prayer, in either her own room or walking in the gardens, and prayer in the chapel with the rest of the household.

Lawson had a household schedule comparable to Anne Howard:

Mass in the morning; Even-song in the afternoon, about four of the clock, with the Litanies of Loretto to recommend to the Sacred Virgins custody the safety of her house and a De-profundus for the faithful departed; between eight and nine att night, Litanies of Saints, att which all her servants were present. On festival days they also heard Mass and Even song, and when there was not a sermon in the morning, there was usually a Catechisme in the afternoon, to which her neighbours children were call’d with her own household, and herself never absent, delighting much to hear them examin’d, and distributed medals and Agnus Dei’s to those that answer’d best.

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602 Lives, 203.
603 Lives, 203.
604 Lives, 206.
605 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 39. Palmes writes that she made her prayer “solitary in her closet” and she spent much time “ruminating in the afternoon, as she walk’d solitary in the house or garden.”
606 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 43.
Holy week included all the usual ceremonies Catholics would find on the continent, including Tenebraes on the Wednesday of holy week, with fifteen candles representing the apostles, disciples and Mary. On Thursday, she had set out a sepulcher decorated with jewels, which neighbors and family attended during the day and nighttime. Friday included a creeping to the cross, with special Mass and benediction on Saturday and Sunday. She celebrated Christmas with her tenants and neighbors and celebrated three Masses ending with a feast of Christmas pie.  

The schedules of both Lawson’s and Howard’s household centered around the space of the chapel and the actions of Catholic ritual, revealing that these houses had duplicitous meanings based on the cognitive definitions of space, the materials used within, and the interactions that took place inside. These chapels were a political outcry against Protestantism. They promoted Catholicism to neighbors and servants and preserved the faith through the practice of Catholic rituals. Widows redefined and recreated domestic space to accommodate their desire to live the rest of their lives in devotion to God, and the fact that these spaces were households meant that they invited likeminded individuals to join them.

However, the use of domestic space for Mass and other ceremonies required more than walls and worshippers. It also required adaptable materials for the proper performance of Mass. Penal laws caused priests and laity to hide or smuggle chalices, candles, vestments, and other items necessary for the proper performance of the liturgy. It appears that the concealing and adapting of ritual objects for service was successful in England, as studies have shown that following the Reformation, priests frequently arrived at dissenting country houses to say Mass and usually found everything necessary for the service. J.J. Scarisbrick describes, “caches of

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607 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 44.
mass vestments” and the important role of country houses in the survival of the faith, since they provided “mass-centers, created communities of Catholics consisting of families, servants and dependants, and sheltered priests as tutors, chaplains or itinerant missionaries smuggled in or hidden from ransacking pursuivants.” Catholics hoarded many of these items from the Marian regime; others smuggled items in from the continent. An examination of Ralph Palmer and John Smithe, seminary priests taken in Sussex in 1586, suggests that it was common for items to be smuggled into England, although amidst their descriptions of their movements in France, they denied bringing in bulls and relics into England. Some items were special made for the purpose of quick and clandestine use. The image below (Figure 4.6) shows an English chalice and a paten from the seventeenth-century. Both items were necessary to serve the consecrated bread and wine, with the paten sitting atop the chalice on which to put the sacramental bread. The chalice featured here unscrewed in three parts so that it could be stored for travel or easily hidden. Further material remains of the English recusant past include travel boxes for itinerant priests that included all materials necessary for the Mass (Figure 4.7), in case houses did not have the necessary materials. Such boxes included a top layer of goods that disguised the illegal items, more often featuring items a peddler might carry such as ribbons or bonnets. Concealed underneath were a portable church and all materials necessary for a Catholic priest to say Mass, including robes, chalices, patens, and an altar stone. Portable altar stones housed martyrs’ relics

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609 *The examinations of Ralph Palmer and John Smithe*, 1586, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/187 f. 9.
Frances Dolan has argued that books, devotional items, and ideas were all moved back and fourth between national borders, and that the government was concerned about the importation of goods and ideas. She states, “By remaining in, or returning to, England, Catholics troubled the very notion of Englishness.” Dolan, “Gender and Lost Spaces,” 643.
Figure 4.6: Chalice and Paten, c. 1630-1650.

Figure 4.7: A Peddler’s Trunk, 1600s. Stonyhurst College. Google image.
and transformed any space into a sacred space by providing the necessary stone on which to consecrate the bread and wine.\textsuperscript{610}

These elaborate disguises and deceptions to conceal materials of the mass reveals the importance such materials held to the Mass. Not only did Catholics require a space within which to meet, but they also needed tangible items to perform the Mass. This need was more dangerous because such items could betray the owners. Households used for Mass still looked like a house to searchers, because Catholics merely adapted their conception of the space to make it sacred. Except for a few cases where actual chapels were constructed, the parlors or dining halls within which individuals met for Mass still appeared as a typical parlor or dining hall. Worshipers redefined the space based on the actions and interactions within the walls. Priests could pose as travelers, family members, peddlers, or friends of the family and conceal themselves from searchers. While people and spaces could adapt, material objects of ritual, such as a chalice, vestments, or altar stone, could only slightly adjust their physical appearance. Some could be concealed or transformed, such as the folding chalice, but their look and essence once found remained the same. Any object of popery found in a house signaled illegal or treasonous activity. Thus, vestments were a dangerous signpost to searchers for any Catholic family.

In the same way gender influenced harboring priests, gender influenced the creation and location of Catholic ritual objects. Women frequently knit and made massing objects including massing cakes and vestments. For example, a woman called “Harding’s widow” and the wife of a prisoner called “Cooke”, were both accused of making “hosts or sacramental bread and wax lights, and purveys all other complements for massing and superstitious uses” for masses said

\textsuperscript{610} One such portable chest is housed at Stonyhurst College, a Jesuit school in Lancashire. This piece was featured in a joint British Museum and BBC 4 exhibition and blog series titled “Shakespeare’s Restless World”. July 28, 2016. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01gvthw. This peddlar’s trunk was found in the walls of a Catholic house near Stonyhurst College.
within the Clink in London.\textsuperscript{611} Searchers caught the widow, Jane Wiseman, preparing for a Mass in Essex in 1594. In a message to the Lord Keeper Puckering, these searchers stated that she had made a “rich vestment”, and sent it to priests in Wisbeach prison.\textsuperscript{612} Sewing and embroidery was an acceptable form of manual labor for women in early modern Europe, and thus it is not surprising that women were the ones accused of creating vestments for Catholic Mass.\textsuperscript{613} Sewing, and thus the creation of some of these illegal items, was a service to the clandestine Catholic community particularly suited for women.

Since Catholic widows commonly facilitated Mass within the household, early modern correspondence and state papers show that widows were frequently caught in possession of vestments and Catholic objects necessary to cater to the Catholic community. Eleanor Brooksby and her sister Anne Vaux kept an impressive cache of religious objects, according to an inventory created in 1606. Listed items included:

Two gold reliquaries of two of the thorns  
A great relic of gold with leaves to open  
Father Ignatius picture of gold  
St. Stephen’s jawbone in gold and crystal  
A bone of St. Modwen of Burton set in gold  
A piece of a hair shirt of St. Thomas of Canterbury set in gold  
A thumb of Mr. Robert Sutton set in gold  
A gold cross full of relics that was Mrs Anne’s grandmother’s  
A gold crucifix bigger than that full of relics  
For church stuff: A vestment of cloth of silver and embroidered cross of gold upon it, stole and maniple of the same  
A vestment of cloth of gold, stole and maniple  
Two tunicles of purple  
A taffeta vestment with an embroidered Jesus  
An altarcloth to that with letters about: these two things were Mr. Page’s the

\textsuperscript{612} Rich. Young to Lord Keeper [Puckering], Jan. 2 1594, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/247 f.3.  
\textsuperscript{613} Claire Walker, Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 96.
These objects lent legitimacy to secular rooms used as sacred space. Relics from recently executed priests, such as Sutton and Page, honored martyrs and no doubt generated feelings of unity and community between Catholics in the house and other Catholics in England. The image of Ignatius Loyola claimed a connection with the Jesuits. Massing garments brought tradition and normalcy to a population displaced from their normal places of worship. Together, Catholic material culture helped to adapt domestic space for spiritual use by acting as tangible links to dwindling religious traditions and providing a service for local Catholics. Thus, such items were worth protecting to English Catholics, despite the penalty of the law. Authorities found a chalice during the search of a widow’s house in New Ross, a place known for priest harboring and Mass.  

During a search of Thomas Throckmorton’s house in 1593, searchers found “divers superstitious things and furniture for Masse.” At the time, the widow Arden maintained the house. Items were found concealed under staircases, in cabinets, and under floorboards. A search of the widow Lady Mary West’s house in Winchester in December 1583 found multiple hides with a variety of popish items. The first hide was a “secret place enclosed with boards where laid divers new and old papistical books, printed and written.” The second hide was underground and vaulted, within which searchers found “Massing apparel; a chalice of tin; a box
full of singing-cakes; a rich canopy of silver of goldsmith’s work; needlework cloths upon velvet
for the altar; Corpus cakes; a pax of ivory set in wood. There was also wrapped in green silk two
Agnus Deis enclosed in satin.”620 Searchers inventoried the arsenal of Catholic objects, which
together would have supplied a Mass, and sent the list to Sir Francis Walsingham. West’s house
was relieved of all Catholic objects and her servant, Francis, was arrested. Despite the cache of
illegal objects and evidence of clandestine Mass performed within the walls, West herself, a
widow with property and authority, was never prosecuted.621 The frequent presence of widows in
correspondence detailing house searches that produced items for Mass possibly shows that
houses of widows likewise carried a certain degree of protection against intrusion. While these
examples reveal a breach of privacy, by examining the layers of privacy and the use of such
spaces, it can be concluded that the act of hiding materials was calculated and potentially
benefited from gendered stereotypes.

The walls of gentry households maintained by widows not only protected the practice of
Catholic worship, but they also housed Catholic schools and meeting spaces for Jesuit priests –
additional uses of the household for the benefit of the widows’ Catholic network. Both sets of
interactions between Catholics required a space that could accommodate semi-private gatherings
of large numbers of people without detection. Secret Catholic schools saw students coming in
and out of the house, while Jesuit meetings saw large numbers of men crossing the threshold.

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620 The Bishop and Mayor of Winchester, and others of the city, to Walsyngham, Dec. 10 1583, at the National
621 The Bishop and Mayor of Winchester, and others of the city, to Walsyngham, Dec. 10, 1583, at the National
Despite the prevailing culture of hospitality shown in gentry households, both actions were dangerous and could potentially attract attention.\textsuperscript{622}

The widow Elizabeth Vaux successfully ran a secret Catholic school at Harrowden Hall in Northamptonshire in the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{623} Harrowden’s isolated location and natural geography, coupled with Vaux’s ability to maintain a façade of private Protestant education to the Privy Council, spun a web of protection over the house until the events of the Gunpowder Plot. Following her husband’s death in 1594, Vaux moved her household to Harrowden where she built a three-story wing onto the existing house with the help of priest hide architect Nicholas Owen. Here she set up a Jesuit College under the guidance of the Jesuit John Gerard.\textsuperscript{624} Gerard wrote in his autobiography, “here she erected a three-storied building for Father Percy and me. It was most conveniently designed and secluded. From our quarters we could pass out unnoticed into the private garden and through the broad walks into the fields, and there mount our horses to go wherever we wanted.”\textsuperscript{625} He maintained, “She was ready to set up house wherever and in whatever way I judged best for her needs – whether, she protested time and again, it was in London or in the remotest part of England.”\textsuperscript{626} The decision to use the then derelict Harrowden Hall came after a brief time spent at Kirby Hall in 1599, a house that quickly acquired the notice of local authorities as a refuge for priests.\textsuperscript{627} In order to avoid detection, Vaux moved the household to Harrowden in 1600, where the seclusion of the house, along with the

\textsuperscript{622} A.C.F. Beales maintained that the widow and martyr Anne Line taught children within the house she maintained for John Gerard in London. However, I have yet to find evidence for a school under Line’s guidance. Line’s experience is a prime example of failure to hide from the authorities, since her house was searched, she was arrested, and executed in 1601. A.C.F. Beales, \textit{Education Under Penalty: English Catholic Education From the Reformation to the Fall of James II, 1547-1689} (London: University of London, 1963), 80.
\textsuperscript{623} Harrowden Hall has since been rebuilt and stands today as the Wellingborough Golf Club.
\textsuperscript{624} Connelly, \textit{Women of the Catholic Resistance}, 171.
\textsuperscript{625} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 201-2.
\textsuperscript{626} Gerard, \textit{Autobiography}, 185.
\textsuperscript{627} Michael Hodgetts, “A Topographical Index of Hiding Places,” 178.
fields and trees, hid movements of priests and students. The house became more than a shelter for priests. It was a center of Catholic operations and a school for Catholic boys not old enough to travel to Douai in France for a Catholic education.628 Students included local boys and children from other communities who came to live at Harrowden as boarders. Even the son of Elizabeth Vaux’s baker attended the school and went on to become a Jesuit.629

While the location of the house and the surrounding countryside provided ample protection for the clandestine Catholic school, Vaux’s actions to procure a loyal tutor proved to be the greatest camouflage for the treasonous teachings. Since Vaux was a widow with a minor son and heir, she was required to prove to the Privy Council that a Protestant was in charge of educating her son. She chose as tutor Thomas Smith, a graduate of Oxford, which satisfied the Privy Council. However, Smith was a schismatic who in time converted to Catholicism, became a Jesuit, and eventually taught at St. Omers.630 Vaux’s independence and prudence to choose a schismatic covered the Catholic education of her son and other boys with a guise of a proper Protestant education.

Catholic households were also used as meeting houses for Jesuit priests, an action different from harboring priests, as the house was used to host a larger number of people, provide space for discussions, offer food, refreshments and lodging for participants, and yet again, act as a semi-public space for dialogue and interaction. Hosting Jesuit gatherings required a large and secretive space, such as Dorothy Lawson’s house on the Tyne. As discussed above, the location

628 Godfrey Anstruther, Vaux of Harrowden: A Recusant Family (Newport: R.J. Johns Ltd., 1953), 244.
629 Anstruther, Vaux of Harrowden, 244.
630 A “schismatic” or “church papist” was an individual who outwardly conformed to Protestantism while inwardly remaining a Catholic. It was a prudent outward display of religion that contrasted with their inward religious sensibilities. See Alexandra Walsham, Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Conessional Polemic in Early Modern England (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1993), 1. See John Gerard’s discussion of Father Thomas Smith’s conversion in his Autobiography, 219-220; Connelly, Women of the Catholic Resistance, 171.
of St. Antony’s was favorable, due to its easy access from the river and its relative seclusion. Lawson built the house with a mind to use it for religious purposes; therefore, there was ample room for meetings. Every year, at least six Jesuits met in her house for eight days, during which Lawson provided gowns, a refectory, food, and drink. After their stay, she encouraged them to stay “with her another day for recreation after their retirement.”631 As a widow, Lawson dedicated her independence of time and resources to Jesuits, created a domestic space favorable to clandestine meetings, adopted the gendered cultural convention of women as hosts, and transformed her house into a comfortable and protected meeting place. No doubt, this annual meeting required Lawson to obtain additional food, re-organize the house and rooms to accommodate the number of Jesuits meeting, limit the number of outsiders in the house, and schedule typical business or worship practices around the schedule of the Jesuits. Because Lawson had complete control of her house and resources, and had created the space to accommodate such a request, Lawson’s household presents a unique use of space that “by reason of danger and charge… was more admired than imitated.”632 Yet, such privacy was only as good as the household staff, who were charged with keeping the secrets of materials, peoples, and activities within the house.

*Managing a Catholic Household*

The degree of loyalty shown by servants could either preserve or betray a Catholic household, no matter how protected it was by structure or the surrounding natural landscape. Servants kept searchers at the door during the search of Baddesley Clinton, giving adequate time

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to hide both priests and objects successfully. However, servants could also be the downfall of households. Karen Spierling’s study of servants in Reformation Geneva found that while the consistory regularly questioned servants for their knowledge of their masters, the servants more often stayed loyal to their masters instead of truthfully answering inquiries regarding the household. Yet, sometimes “competing obligations of household solidarity and godly community” motivated servants to report on illegal dealings in the household. In England, the servant Anne Percye reported that there were, on separate occasions, three priests in the house of her mistress, Lady Lovell. Seminary priest John Payne was executed after being betrayed by the servant of his harborer, the widow Petre. Examples abound of servants who betrayed their employers or neighbors, thereby revealing the vulnerability in trusting those who crossed the threshold. The great houses of the widows in question required servants, yet allowing individuals within the privacy of the home with unknown religious allegiances was a dangerous risk. Thus, controlling the people employed in the household became vital for successful Catholic households.

In Elizabethan England, it was a woman’s role to remain in the house and to keep it well maintained. Married women were responsible for the health and maintenance of the household,

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636 Salisbury documents on the Examination of Lady Lovell, at Hatfield House, Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Vol. 17 [985].
637 Foley, Records, 551.
the religious education of children, and their duty to their husband. Women also had a responsibility to maintain the reputation of the house. To allow strangers into the house or to visit certain neighbors was to allow gossip and slander. A woman’s most honorable occupation was to be a good housewife. These gendered structures informed the actions of widows as well, on which the responsibility for maintaining households rested fully on their shoulders. No longer under the authority of their husbands, Catholic widows of a higher social status could maintain their households as they saw fit, creating a cover of privacy through the hiring and maintaining of loyal persons. As shown in Alice Friedman’s case study of the Willoughby family at Wollaton Hall in the late-sixteenth century, based on household orders written by Francis Willoughby, the reality of the day-to-day relationships amidst family and household staff could be rife with power struggles and intrigue. Yet the biographers of Lady Magdalen Montague and Anne Howard both discussed the management of the household as a positive quality for their respective widows due to their ability to collect and maintain trustworthy servants.

Dorothy Lawson maintained and organized the movement and interaction of individuals within her house in a way different from a married woman – indeed, even different from her own time as a married woman. While married and living at Heton, her biographer writes:

Her prime intentions were to prepare a house for God, which shee did in a decent garbe, and had every month a priest secretly… Her second care and solicitude was to provide Catholick servants: the which shee did so dexterously by little and little, hiering one after another, and never two att once, that her husband, between jest and earnest, tould her, his family was become Papists ere he perceived it. Nevertheless shee was forced to convey the priest into the house by night, and lodged him in a chamber, which to avoid suspicion, was appointed by grant from her husband only for the children to say their prayers.640

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Lawson was limited in her control of the household because she had to answer to her husband. Catholic servants were hired slowly, priests were ushered in under the cover of night, and Lawson’s actions had to be done in secret. While as a wife, she was able to maintain a secret Catholic household, it was inhibited by the necessary practice of obedience to her husband. Lawson’s household governance changed exponentially following the death of her husband. Instead of maintaining a priest in secret, maneuvering in and out at night, she kept a full-time priest in the house for the instruction of her children, along with a schoolmaster.\textsuperscript{641} In addition, she provided spiritual resources for her servants, even to the point of teaching her maids about saints’ lives and reading them Catholic books. Her autonomy in household management allowed her to keep Catholic servants and encourage their spiritual care as well. Not only did Lawson keep Catholic servants, but also her biographer maintained that she created a culture of love, fear, and respect for her and her family in order to maintain loyalty. Palmes writes, “In the government of her family, her authority, prudence, sweetness, and gravity, was such, that every one lov’d her with fear, and fear’d her with love. Shee gave her servants more than was due in temporalls as a bountifull mistress.”\textsuperscript{642} Lawson’s famed protection from authorities could be attributed to her creation of a loyal household, even down to the servants, who she was sure to keep content and loyal.

Similarly, Anne Howard maintained a large household following the death of her husband in 1595. Her children, sister’s children, friends, and other kin frequently passed through or lived in her house, not to mention the frequent movement of a number of servants. At her death, she requested twelve to fourteen of her servants to accompany her body from Shropshire.

\textsuperscript{641} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 48.
\textsuperscript{642} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 48.
to Arundel, suggesting that she regularly maintained more than this number, at least in her final years.\textsuperscript{643} Her biographer concedes that a number of these individuals were Protestant, however, he commends Anne of her treatment of them, stating “whatever, or whoever they were, if once they were admitted into her house, she took such care of them that they neither should want any thing due, or convenient for them according to their degree and quality, nor live otherwise than civil, honest, and orderly.”\textsuperscript{644} Howard kept her house in good order, kept her servants happy, and created a space that inspired loyalty. Not only was her house a space of employment for these individuals, it was also a place to catechize, convert, and strengthen the faith of future or professed Catholics. By ensuring a vast majority of the servants were of the same mind and religious leanings, Howard and Lawson both created an additional layer of protection to the household. The hiring, maintaining, and education of servants was an opportunity provided by widowhood that was not available to either Lawson or Howard while married. Widowhood provided the occasion to maintain the household as they saw fit. Like Lawson, Howard encouraged prayers and devotions from her servants, and welcomed them to accompany her to Mass, Evensong, and Litanies. Her biographer maintained that a number of servants were sure to attend such services in order to please her.\textsuperscript{645} As a result, a number of servants converted to Catholicism while employed by Howard, possibly instilling a new sense of loyalty to the household.\textsuperscript{646}

Benefits of hiring a Catholic household staff are described in the tract \textit{Reasons why Catholicks should rather entertaine Catholick then Protestant Servants}, an anonymous document penned in 1689, currently housed in the Fitzalan-Howard family archives at Arundel Castle.

\textsuperscript{643} Lives, 262.  
\textsuperscript{644} Lives, 237.  
\textsuperscript{645} Lives, 239.  
\textsuperscript{646} Lives, 242.
Besides showing charity first to Catholics before Protestants, the author argued that Catholics were more likely to “performe their services better then Protestants.”\(^{647}\) In addition, Catholic servants “doe exercise continually high acts of obedience meritorious in the sight of God…whiche can not bee with Protestant servants.”\(^{648}\) While written almost sixty years after Howard’s death, the potential obedience and loyalty in Catholic servants would have resonated with Howard after she experienced a betrayal from a friend’s servant. In 1583, the groom of the chamber to Lady Margaret Sackville, a friend of Howard, happened to find a small purse in an outer chamber of the dining room where Sackville and Howard frequently sat together. In a declaration made before Lord Buckhurst, George Lawe stated that he picked up the purse and looked inside, where he found notes addressed to” Lady Arundel”, trinkets, and a cloth dipped in blood. All were presumed to be popish items. He recalled Howard being “nervously sad and sorrowful” the day before, presuming that this was in regards to the lost purse. Her countenance, together with the note addressed to her name, convinced Lawe that the contents belonged to Anne Howard. \(^{649}\) Lawe further addressed the Catholicism of Howard by claiming she had attended Mass in her brother-in-law’s house in London, Lord William Howard. Despite the evidence, there is no documentation that Anne was punished for being in possession of these items, or for the claim that she attended Mass in London.

While there were obvious benefits to keeping Catholic servants, in reality, not every widow kept a household entirely comprised of professed Catholics. Howard’s biographer mentions a Protestant servant who stayed with Howard for more than thirty years. This suggests

\(^{647}\) *Reasons why Catholicks should prefer Catholic servants before Protestants*, 1689, at Arundel Castle Archives, MD 379, f. 1.

\(^{648}\) *Reasons why Catholicks should prefer Catholic servants before Protestants*, 1689, at Arundel Castle Archives, MD 379, f.2.

\(^{649}\) *Declaration of George Lawe, made before Lord Buckhurst*, Dec. 20 1583, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/164 f. 79.
that agreement in religion was not a necessary trait in a master/servant relationship, or it may suggest that Howard encouraged a sort of co-existence within her household, a further tactic to preserve the safety and security of what went on behind closed doors. Her strict management of the activities within the house suggests that it was her goal to facilitate good relations with her Protestant neighbors and encourage a sort of co-existence. She banned late night activities or noise that could potentially alienate the community, and she ordered, “no publick sport should be made on Sundayes or other Holydayes at the times of Protestant service, not to give them offence.”650 This gesture towards coexistence with Protestant neighbors is evidence of a strategic protection of domestic space.651 The veil of protection over the household did not stop at walls, hiding places, or Catholic servants. Protection required a permeable and open relationship with neighbors to shield the house from alienation or retaliation.

The gendered role of women as maintainers of the household meant that the accepted social structures of domestic governance gave room for Catholic women to create a culture of respect within the household to promote Catholicism from the inside out, and protect it from local magistrates. Widowhood meant further freedom to create and maintain a Catholic household without input or obstruction from a husband. Widows’ use of space, maintenance of space, and supervision over the interaction of individuals within that space spilled into the public sphere in their acts of charity to neighbors. Much like in the house, stereotypes of widowhood accompanied widows’ actions in their community and created a coverture for conversion and catechism.

650 Lives, 238.
Widows and the Community

The permeable boundary of the household not only welcomed trusted individuals into the household for Catholic worship, education, work, and retreats, but also widows transected the threshold to catechize and care for the poor and sick in their community. An excursion from protected households into public streets, inns, jails, and households of unvetted neighbors was understandably more dangerous since public actions garnered more eyewitnesses. By moving from the interior of the household into the exterior of its walls, this analysis reveals that the unique economic, social, and cultural frameworks associated with widowhood likewise protected catechism and charity in public space. Although, this section also argues that the dynamics of the local community played an important role in either enabling or ignoring Catholic widows’ actions.

A variety of historical narratives exists depicting the relationship between widows and their neighboring community. Old widows are frequently portrayed as individuals who cease to contribute to society and are dependent on the charity of their community or families. A woman who lived on her own contradicted patriarchal authority and could be deemed a threat to the social order, as shown in contemporary literature that depicts widows as foolish, pathetic creatures. Poor widows who were isolated from their community and required assistance were easy targets for accusations of witchcraft within fearful, tight-knit communities. However,


653 In the 1970s, Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane introduced a “community-based historiography” into studies of early modern witch-hunts. Such an approach was more interested in the circumstances of accusations, not necessarily the trials themselves, thereby focusing on stresses within the communities and relationships with accused witches as instigators of witch-hunts. Alan Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart Essex: Comparative Study (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) and Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York:
studies have shown that wealthy widows were hospitable and charitable neighbors and appear to have placed a great deal of value on taking care of their neighbors with their economic independence, showing that some widows rejected the stereotype of isolation and positively impacted their local community. From a study of wills, Vivian Brodsky argues that for a number of widows, “neighborhood replaced kinship as the key determinant of their social interactions.” Amidst 200 wills, 55 percent of the legatees were unrelated servants, neighbors, or friends. As single women with an availability of time and resources, early modern English widows were known for assisting the poor and sick in their communities. Felicity Heal argues, “Although wives might well enjoy the freedom to offer this personal care to the poor both inside and outside the household, it was widows who were most frequently remarked for their sustained generosity,” as seen in funeral monuments from the seventeenth century.

Wills and funeral monuments testify to early modern widows utilizing their greater freedom with time and money to perpetuate a culture of neighborly care. For Catholic widows, this prevailing power over resources facilitated a natural and culturally acceptable space within which widows could provide charity for neighbors under the guise of hospitality, and catechize and convert the community under the cultural stereotype of widows caring for the poor. Since neighbors’ houses were spaces where widows frequently practiced charity, Catholic widows could do the same with the intent to convert neighbors to the Catholic faith.

Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971). For a more recent work, see Robin Briggs, Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 17. In a case study in this book, Briggs examines accusations of witchcraft in Lorraine and finds that half of the women accused were widows, 228.


houses and the welcoming of the local community into their own households were public actions undertaken by Catholic widows to convert, catechize, and care for the poor that had the potential to attract scrutiny if witnessed by the wrong individual. Yet, drawing individuals back to the faith through the lived example of piety and charity was an essential part of the clandestine Catholic community, and yet again, Catholic widows had a unique opportunity to do so due to their gender, marital status, and accompanying cultural expectations for public behavior. While the previous analysis has focused on the space, interactions, and materials within the house, the final section examines the influence the widow and household had outside the house, amidst the local community. Under the widow’s guidance, the household provided food, alms, medicinal care, and catechism to the surrounding community as a center of bodily and spiritual care, furthering the permeable nature of this semi-public space.

There were underlying conditions that afforded Catholic widows the ability to catechize, convert, and practice charity in their local community. The first requirement was the financial means to do so. While widowhood provided the best chance for economic autonomy, a vast majority of widows were not wealthy, therefore, this study necessarily focuses on wealthy widows. The dichotomous and divergent narratives regarding widowhood in early modern Europe are in large part dependent on wealth and family connection. Second, for Catholic widows desiring to convert their neighbors, their success was reliant on the religious tolerance of the local magistrates and neighbors. Without proper connections, financial resources, or local examples of coexistence, widowhood could in fact provide serious limitations, as seen in the example of Lady Constance Foljambe. Two divergent depictions of Lady Constance appear within sixteenth-century letters and nineteenth-century histories that speak of her arrest. The first is a description of her by the Protestant men in her social circle, which focused on her identity as
an old woman and a threat to the community. This preoccupation with her deviance is similar to histories of widows that depict them as burdensome because of their age, gender, and marital status. However, these same letters also reveal a fear for her release from captivity, because she was influential in maintaining a Catholic community in Tupton, Derbyshire. This dual perception of Lady Constance as both a deviant and as integral to local Catholics reveals a more complex social role for widows in early modern English communities.

The details about the early life of Lady Constance Foljambe are largely unknown since most sources that mention her name deal with her arrest or her ties to the Foljambe family. From the nineteenth-century history of the Wrays family, a family connected to the Foljambe’s by marriage, we know that Constance was born around 1519 to Sir Edward Littleton of Pillaton from the county of Stafford, and she died in 1600 at the age of 81. She married James Foljambe, a knight and the Lord of Walton and other estates in Derbyshire and Yorkshire, although the date of their nuptials is unknown. She was the second wife of James, whose first wife Alice was the daughter of Thomas Fitzwilliam of Aldwark. From the first marriage, James had three sons and five daughters, from which came a grandson named Godfrey Foljambe, responsible for the arrest of Lady Constance. The marriage between Constance and James produced five daughters and one son, and ended with the death of James in 1558. For 42 years, Lady Constance lived as a widow.

657 See MS 710, f.19; MS 3204, f. 121; MS 3204, f. 25; and MS 3204, f. 126 in the Talbot Papers at Lambeth Palace Library, London.
659 All information regarding the children of both Alice and Constance with James comes from the number of children represented with each wife in the Foljambe burial chapel in Chesterfield. A mural monument was erected by Godfrey Foljambe, the same grandson of James. This mural included a kneeling figure of a knight, along with his two wives and children. Both Constance and Alice are mentioned in the inscription that accompanies the mural which states: “James was happy in two-fold wedlock; namely with Alicia, the grand-daughter and co-heiress of that illustrious hero, William Fitz-William of Aldwarke, Earl of Southampton: and with Constantia, daughter of Edward Littleton, of the country of Stafford, a man of knightly dignity”, as translated from the Latin in Stephen Glover.
On February 16, 1587, Godfrey Foljambe arrested his widowed grandmother for recusancy. Godfrey wrote a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury from his house at Walton in Derbyshire, stating that he had arrested his grandmother, Lady Constance Foljambe, for recusancy as the earl had suggested, and he currently had her in his custody. Godfrey had multiple motives to arrest his grandmother, including the prospect of a possible solution to his financial woes with the likelihood of acquiring her goods upon her arrest. Godfrey Foljambe was born in 1558 and following the death of his father in 1585, he inherited the property of both his grandfather James and his father. Yet he soon “fell as in former tyme to be in want of monies to supplie his occasions.” These financial troubles arose around the same time of the arrest of Lady Constance. It was common for family members to inherit the forfeited estates of those they accused of recusancy. In a letter written by Lady Constance in 1589 to the Earl of Shrewsbury, she complained that Godfrey refused to return her goods and property he had acquired following her arrest. Thus, Godfrey did in fact profit from the arrest of his grandmother during a time of financial difficulties, signaling a potential motivation for the betrayal. He was also married to a staunch Protestant, Isabel, the daughter of Sir Christopher Wray, the Lord Chief Justice of England, thereby providing both religious and political pressures to rid the county of any religious disturbance, regardless of family ties. To be sure, the fact that he was the Sherriff of

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662 There are multiple cases where the betrayal by a family member resulted in the death of the accused. See John Charles Cox, *Three centuries of Derbyshire Annals* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1890), 255.

663 Foljambe to Earl of Shrewsbury, 22 September 1589, Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 3205, f. 36.

Derbyshire, a position that involved the occasional arrest of deviants and recusants in the county, was reason enough. Although, Lady Constance’s arrest was not due to the actions of her grandson alone; two weeks earlier, she was approached by Francis Leake, a man charged with rounding up recusants in the area. In a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury written on February 2, 1587, Leake explained that he spent some time in Tupton apprehending recusants for the crown. Leake listed three recusants he met while in Tupton – Richard Kitchen, Richard Copstack, and William Sherbrook – all of whom he arrested. However, he explained to the Earl that when he found Lady Constance and told her that it was his duty to commit her to the charge of her step-grandson Godfrey, she replied that “she was by age, and sickness of the stone, not able to travel either on horseback or on foot, and so desired me to let your Lordship understand; whereupon she as yet remaineth at Tupton.” Due to her age and frail nature, Leake left her alone and instead took the three men into custody. For a brief moment, Lady Constance’s age and frailty, together with the leniency of local authorities, protected her from punishment for her religious convictions.

The reason for Leake’s leniency towards Lady Constance is a mystery. In late sixteenth-century England, gentry were allowed to pay a fee for their recusancy in exchange for freedom from punishment from the law. Following February of 1585, the Lords of the Council sent instructions to the Earl of Shrewsbury regarding three leading recusants of the county. The name Foljambe is included here, although it is unknown if this is a reference to Constance or another relative. Nevertheless, the Earl was asked to “set down sums which they are respectively

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665 Cox, Derbyshire Annales, 58.
667 Cox, Derbyshire Annals, 255.
willing to pay yearly in order to be discharged of the penalty of law." In addition, recusants of Derbyshire provided horses for the Queen’s dealings in the Low Countries in return for being left alone. The recusants of Derbyshire paid £20 per month in order to live in peace. There is no evidence that Lady Foljambe paid such a fee, although the fact that Leake left her in Tupton and arrested the other three men could suggest that money changed hands, or that her frail state inspired pity.

The day after Leake wrote and sent his letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, a servant to the Earl sent a reply on the Earl’s behalf, requesting the arrest of Lady Foljambe despite her ailments, age, and the apparent policy payment in exchange for peace. On February 3, 1587 the unknown author writes, “the Lady Foljamb is suspected to do most hurt in those parts, by so much the more his Lordship willingly would have her committed.” However, Leake does not arrest Lady Foljambe; instead, Godfrey Foljambe, her step-grandson and the Sherriff of Derbyshire, made the arrest two weeks later. Another letter written two years later by John Coke, the rector of Tupton, the small community in which Lady Constance lived, asked the Earl to prevent her release from custody due to the potential “evil effect” it could have on the many recusants he had converted in her absence. From this letter, it appears that Tupton had a number of Catholics before the arrest of Lady Constance, who converted to Protestantism following her arrest. Coke feared that her release would reverse the work he had done in converting the community. From these sixteenth-century letters, Lady Constance has two

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668 Cox, Derbyshire Annals, 255.
669 Cox, Derbyshire Annales, 255.
divergent identities. The first, an old, sick woman who should be left alone from local magistrates; the second, a serious threat due to her integral role in the religious leanings of her small community in Tupton. This dichotomous identity of Lady Constance as both weak and influential reveals at least two things about the role of widows in the Catholic community. The first is that widows did have an advantage when it came to magistrates. Although it did not last for long, for a time Lady Constance had coverture for her actions due to her age, gender, and potentially her marital status as a woman without the protection of a man. Francis Leak was willing to look beyond her identity as a recusant and instead focused on her age and gender. Second, women like Lady Constance, though typically marginalized figures in society due to their marital status, did hold sway in their community. While Lady Constance’s experience reveals that widowhood could lead to family members taking advantage of their vulnerable state, these letters also show that she was a pillar in her community and, despite her frail nature, was a feared active force.

Lady Constance Foljambe’s vulnerability lay in the religious predilections of her own family. Some Catholic widows’ vulnerabilities lay in the location of their house, such as Anne Line. Others, it lay in their poverty. Dorothy Lawson had none of these weaknesses, signaling the complexity and variety of experiences for widows in early modern England. Statements about the impact and influence of widows must bear in mind the variety of situations present in early modern society. What can be argued is that when examining the lives of a number of Catholic widows, it appears that marital status provided the greatest opportunity for agency in the Catholic community. While Dorothy Lawson was married, she went out into her community

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673 Of the letters, MS 3204 f. 121, MS 3204 f.125, and MS 3204 f. 126 have been transcribed and are reproduced in Edmund Lodge, Illustrations of British History (London: John Chidley, 1791).
to provide for the poor, but her actions were limited as a woman married to a Protestant. Her influence on her family and community increased after the death of her husband. When Rodger Lawson died, she had the freedom to decide the placement of her children, as will be the topic of the next chapter. Her house became a Catholic hub in the community from which she was able to serve the sick and needy. Palmes writes, “‘Her liberality did bountifully extend to the poor, both by vow and necessity; these shee hourly reliev’d, feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and because shee was a widdow herself, shee kept a purse of twopences for widows.” The impact of Lawson’s house at Heaton is clear as Palmes writes:

When this apostolicall spirit arrived first at Heton, there was but one Catholic family in the parish or circuit; no church-stuff but hers, which was carried to several places upon necessity. Att her departure from thence (or St. Antony’s, which is all one, because it borders upon it) to heaven, there was not one heretick family, and six altars were erected for divine service.

Palmes credits the success of the town’s conversion to Lawson’s “increased zeal” following the death of her husband. It seems more probable that it was instead the opportunity and means available to Lawson as a widow that aided this success. Her freedom from male authority, economic independence, and already marginalized position in society as a widow enabled Lawson to use her time and resources to further the Catholic cause in a Protestant realm. She regularly went out amidst her community as a catechist, caring for the sick and calling them back to the Catholic faith. Palmes wrote, “When any fell into travail or sickness, no occasion of business, weather, or time, were it night or day, detain’d her.” Palmes maintained that in the

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675 Palmes, *Life of Dorothy Lawson*, 25. At the time of her husband’s death, one son was already at the seminary at Douay.
seven years he lived with Dorothy Lawson, not one man, woman, or child died within the parish without baptism.

Lawson frequently traveled to local houses to comfort both the body and soul of her neighbors with relics and cordials. William Palmes remarked that she “played the catechist, so as I had no other share in the work but to take their confessions.”679 Palmes’ description of her activities outside of the household suggests at least three things. First, Lawson personified the wealthy widow of early modern England, who spent her time and resources in the community caring for the poor and distressed. She fell perfectly within the cultural stereotype, which she manipulated to promote Catholicism. Lawson’s persona as a charitable widow covered her actions as a religious deviant. Second, it appears that Lawson had positive relationships with her neighbors and surrounding community, to the point that Palmes writes, “shee gained so much on the opinion of neighbours, that they would generally say, they fear’d not if Mrs. Lawson were with them.”680 Third, the narrative shows that Lawson frequently left the protective cover of her household to extend her sphere of influence into the community. This suggests that the space of Catholic households spread into the community through the extension of the people, goods, and ideas that moved from inside the house, into neighbors’ houses. The household was permeable, despite the solid structure of the walls. The households of Dorothy Lawson and others became centers of charity, both from within and without.

Consider Anne Howard’s charity of doling out food and medicines to the local poor from the doorstep of her house, further illustrating the permeable membrane of domestic space.

Typically, a threshold was a material separation from the privacy of the household to the public.

679 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 45.
680 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 45.
Howard’s threshold was a porous barrier between the Mass and priest harboring within, and the potentially dangerous local community, rife with Protestants, spies, and authorities. Within the space that acted as a gateway, Howard provided meals for the hungry, medicines for the sick, and alms for the poor to garner the goodwill of her neighbors in order to mask the illegal and potentially treasonous actions within. Her biographer wrote:

Whilst I liv’d with her she changed her habitation four times upon just occasions, and in all those places, tho’ of different shires some of them far distant from one another, and the people of diverse dispositions, yet she was exceedingly belov’d and esteem’d of all sorts and degrees, Catholicks, Protestants, Puritans, yea even Ministers out of gratitude for courtesies and benefits receiv’d from her, could not but speak well of her; and some of them publickly in their sermons have prais’d and commended her, proposing her example in Charity and Piety as a pattern for those of their Religion to imitate, confessing that the professors thereof had great reason to blush, and be ashamed of themselves to see how far short they were of her.  

While in Shropshire during the final two years of her life, a location far from London nestled in a small community, Howard’s biographer recounted the daily alms given at the gate of the house. Three days a week, Howard brought in the poor, across the threshold of privacy, to provide bread, pottage, meat, and something to drink. At times more than one hundred would visit to partake in the meal. Howard was also renown to the community for her medicines, salves, and remedies. Her biographer writes, “And her charity herein was so famous, that not only neighbors, but several out of other shires, twenty, forty, and more miles distant did resort unter her to that end, and scarce a day pass’d in which many did not come, sometimes more than threescore have been counted in one day.”

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681 Lives, 251.
683 Lives, 212.
brought from inside to help the local community, illustrating a complex and permeable relationship of domestic space with the surrounding community.

The charitable actions of widows encouraged a sense of community while they simultaneously sheltered themselves from outsiders.\(^{684}\) There was a delicate balance of protecting oneself while wielding power in the community and Catholic widows maintained this balance through the careful and intentional use of the household – a dichotomously semi-public space of both privacy and hospitality. Dorothy Lawson and Anne Howard not only protected Catholicism from within, but also they promoted it in the community, thereby extending their sphere of influence beyond the walls protecting priests, Mass, and Catholic objects. These actions were a fulfillment of a common cultural stereotype for wealthy widows to devote their ample time and resources towards charity. Anne Howard’s biographer wrote, “It is a custom in this Kingdom used by our Forefathers for the maintenance and conservation of Charity, that those of the better sort do invite their neighbors to dine or supp with them.”\(^{685}\) Such actions could lead to scrutiny and arrest, as shown through the example of Lady Constance Foljambe. Yet the examples of Howard and Lawson reveal that charitable acts towards neighbors could provide a coverture around disruptive or illegal actions. Here lies a potential avenue of future analysis into forms of coexistence facilitated through charitable works.

While the above examples show the impact widows could have on their communities, the following suggests that communities were likewise influential to the success of Catholic households. The religious, political, and social dynamics of the local community affected the success or failure of widows’ households to avoid detection or prosecution. In a sense,

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\(^{684}\) An argument proposed by Mary Elizabeth Perry regarding the matriarchal homes of Moriscos in early modern Spain. *The Handless Maiden*, 71, 72.

\(^{685}\) *Lives*, 246.
maintaining Catholic households and harboring priests was a communal affair and relied on the
discretion of neighbors and magistrates, whether they were Protestant or Catholic. Although, a
modern understanding of such dynamics at the point in time these widows maintained their
households is tenuous. Local travel guides and histories of various counties in England from the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries oftentimes hint at the religious convictions of the local
populace in post-Reformation England, although these are far from complete analyses. In
addition, such histories focus on the county as a whole and do not provide evidence for the
nuclear community surrounding specific households.686 Some modern histories, such as Roger
Manning’s Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex, have closely examined the success or
failure of local justices of the peace in enforcing the Elizabethan Settlement. For Sussex, the
county where Lady Magdalen Montague effectively maintained “little Rome”, Manning
concluded that the parish churchwardens responsible for holding nobles answerable for their
recusancy “whether out of loyalty or fear of reprisal, often felt that they could not afford the
luxurious independence of presenting their betters for recusancy.”687 Churchwardens were
unreliable, justices of the peace were far from rigorous in their assessments, prison officials were
untrustworthy, and if noblemen remained loyal, the household enjoyed an exemption from local
magistrates.688 Despite the harsh penal laws against priests, only on one occasion was an
execution carried out in Sussex under the Act against Seminary priests.689 These local
inadequacies in enforcement, combined with the fact that the Montague family owned extensive

687 Roger Manning, Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 131. For
other examples of county histories, see Hugh Aveling, Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of
Yorkshire 1558-1790 (London: Chapman, 1966) and Christopher Haigh, Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire
688 Manning, Religion and Society, 132, 136, 141, 159.
689 This execution took place in 1588. Manning, Religion and Society, 145.
land, had economic influence, and were careful to declare their loyalty to the monarchy, contributed to Lady Magdalen Montague’s success at Battle Abbey. The assertion that Battle Abbey saw upwards of one hundred and twenty people attending Mass from the community suggests that local Catholics were also dependent on Lady Montague. While Manning argues that Lady Montague’s success was due to the “laxity of local magistrates and the almost complete immunity of the household”, no doubt the religious convictions of the local neighbors also helped to obscure the actions going on within the household.

Yorkshire experienced similar instances of apathetic local authorities, which in turn emboldened the local Catholic community. Hugh Aveling concedes that in reality, the survival of recusants in the north, despite the oppressive penal laws, had to be due to ineffectiveness of local authorities. Laws and fines were partially enforced and there were very few cases of individuals being tried for harboring priests. Aveling maintains that the execution of Margaret Clitherow was “odd and unique.” According to a letter written by Lord North to Lord Burghley in 1597, recusancy in Yorkshire was actually on the rise due to the laxness or “remissness” of civil authorities, the boldness of the recusants themselves, and the belief among the people that due to the strength of recusants, there must be a sort of tolerance being shown to them.

In neighboring Tyne and Ware, a degree of local tolerance and religious pluralism must have existed in the community for local magistrates to attend the public Catholic funeral of Dorothy Lawson. Newcastle is almost 300 miles north of London, a long reach for the monarchy and council. Newcastle was a part of the realm that maintained a strong recusant

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690 Smith, Elizabethan Recusant House, 43.
691 Manning, Religion and Society, 163.
692 Hugh Aveling. Catholic Recusancy in the City of York, 1558-1791 (Catholic Record Society, 1970, 68.
694 Dorothy Lawson’s Catholic funeral is described in her biography. Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 61.
community even amidst the late-sixteenth century anti-Catholic laws. York, Haddock, and Durham, all relatively close to Newcastle, experienced an increase in recusancy just before Lawson’s arrival. This was characteristic of communities in the north, a safe distance from London where some Catholic families with longstanding relationships with the community sustained respect from authorities despite their theological leanings. Some considered Durham itself to be backward, as Sir William Bowes writes in 1595, “False and disloyal religion hath taken deep root, and that in the best houses, increasing daily by the number and diligence.” In north and west Yorkshire, there was an expressed need for clergymen, and a Church of England seminary or university to supply efficient pastors. Whether it was the support of neighbors, Lawson’s own standing in the community, or the leniency of authorities, despite her open Catholicism and activities in the community, she was never bothered for her faith or actions.

Besides general histories of counties, another way to examine neighborhood dynamics surrounding Catholic widows’ households are within individual surviving pieces of correspondence, state papers, or biographies. However, mining local archives for such specific and obscure sources is potentially problematic, especially since legal records more often contain examples of servants or neighbors tattling to local authorities than evidence of compliant or supportive neighbors. Those local communities that allowed or ignored large gatherings of Catholics for Mass would find little benefit in recording such compliance. Oftentimes, clear evidence for a compliant neighborhood is within the longstanding successful existence of

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695 Dolan, “Gender and the ‘Lost’ Spaces of Catholicism”, 642.
Catholic households. Dorothy Lawson and Lady Magdalen Montague operated at St. Antony’s in Newcastle and Battle Abbey in East Sussex, respectively, for roughly sixteen years.\textsuperscript{698} Maintaining a nucleus of local Catholic neighbors was not the only way a local community could contribute towards the protection of the Catholic household. There could have been a local desire for quiet coexistence rather than staunch adherence to the law. In addition, failure to prosecute was oftentimes due to negligence from local magistrates. Correspondence from neighboring counties of Anne Howard’s house in Shropshire – Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire – reveals a lackadaisical response to recusancy. A letter from John Manners to the Earl of Shrewsbury dated September 11, 1592 stated that only he and Sir Thomas Cockayne remained of the commissioners of recusancy who carried out the last search in Derbyshire in 1585. He reported that he only knew of one existing recusant, since the other two had died. From this letter, it appears that seven years had passed since the last search for recusants, and even that search had only turned up three. There was also no sense of urgency to replace the other members of the commission who had died.\textsuperscript{699} A letter from the commissioners for recusancy in Nottinghamshire, addressed to the Privy Council in September 1592 admitted that while they received the instructions from the Council in August to commit the principal recusants to prison, they had failed to gather enough commissioners to carry out the orders.\textsuperscript{700} Such negligence on the part of local officials, whether intentional or unintentional, no doubt factored into Anne Howard’s success in the neighboring county of Shropshire. Her biographer recounts an instance when Anne’s house was under guard due to the suspicion of the presence of a priest named Mr.

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\textsuperscript{698} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 26.
\textsuperscript{699} John Manners to the Earl of Shrewsbury, 11 September 1592, at Lambeth Palace Library, London, Talbot Papers, MS 3199, folio 415.
\end{flushleft}
Blackwell. The officer in charge collaborated with Howard and notified her when the guards changed, so Mr. Blackwell was able to escape safely. Howard gave the officer a large sum of money and every year she sent him a venison pastry “to make merry with his friends, at Christmas.”\footnote{Lives, 217.}

These examples of the presence of local Catholics, relaxed officials, and supportive neighbors suggest that the dynamics of the local community and law enforcement surrounding widows’ households could influence their success and effectiveness. Combing through archives for instances of coexistence within the community remains a ripe area for future study in the history of post-Reformation English Catholic community. Neighborhoods surrounding houses that did not fare as well, such as that of Dame Cecily Stonor, Jane Wiseman, and Anne Line likewise should be examined to understand how local dynamics influenced the prosecution and punishment of certain widows. Evidence from Oxfordshire, the location of Stonor’s household, which was searched and resulted in the execution of Edmund Campion, suggests an operational enforcement of penal laws in the county that differed from enforcement in counties further away from London. An anonymous letter dated 1589 lists the three principal locations recusants should be imprisoned – Ely, Banbury Castle in Oxfordshire, or the house of one Richard Fynes – thereby signaling an active approach to rounding up recusants. The letter’s author laments that there were many notorious recusants, who “should in somme sorte be restrained of their libertie…being many of quallytie and calling.”\footnote{13 March 1589/90, at Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 2008, f. 1.}

Comparing the experiences of Lady Constance Foljambe, Dorothy Lawson, Lady Magdalen Montague, and Anne Howard reveals that a variety of factors influenced the success

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\footnote{Lives, 217.}
\footnote{13 March 1589/90, at Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 2008, f. 1.}
of Catholic households in post-Reformation England. Wealth, family connections, local neighbors, and reputation in the community all seemed to influence how widows were received when they crossed the threshold of their households. While sweeping claims about neighborhoods and counties are problematic since people moved, dynamics changed, different authorities came into local power, and personal relationships could influence treatment, what is clear is that local context is essential to understanding the promotion of Catholicism in the community.

**Conclusion**

Households were a seminal space within which the economic and social autonomy of widows merged to create clandestine spaces of worship. The coverture of cultural stereotypes and independence provided by wealth and social status created layers of privacy from authorities to protect both the practice of harboring priests and the hosting of clandestine Mass. While both of these practices were private, the hosting of Mass was inclusive instead of exclusive, and relied on a network of Catholics to encourage attendance and protect the household from spies and untrustworthy servants. In this way, the threshold of the house facilitated two uses of space at once: the household as a secretive hiding space and a local meeting place for Catholics. Both benefited from the identity of widows in society.

The advantages of widowhood in creating and maintaining a Catholic community in the private household are best highlighted when compared to the opportunities afforded to a married Catholic desirous to do the same. Consider Lady Agnes Wenman whom the Jesuit John Gerard compared to the widow Elizabeth Vaux, his hostess. Wenman came from a Catholic family and lived at the spacious Thame Park in Oxfordshire. Gerard maintained that Wenman wanted to use
this house as Vaux used hers, however, Wenman had one obstacle that Vaux did not. Gerard wrote:

Her husband, however, was a Protestant, and though she was very anxious to do it, she could not keep a priest in her house. Instead, she arranged to support a priest who could visit her regularly during her husband’s absences... I found she never omitted her hour’s meditation or her daily examination of conscience, except on one occasion when her husband insisted on her staying with the guests. Yet she had a large household to keep her busy, and she was seldom without people staying with her.703

Both women were born into Catholic families. Both had a desire to participate in Catholic ritual, and both had a house that was well suited for priests and worship. What Elizabeth Vaux had that Wenman did not was the opportunity to define and utilize her space as she wished. Vaux had autonomy over her time, money, maintenance of her house, and complete control over the people who came and went. Wenman was subject to her husband who did not share her faith or intentions. It is in this comparison that the true opportunities and autonomy provided by widowhood illustrate how marital status could influence the use and definition of space.

Hugh Aveling has argued that of the 300 Catholic households in Yorkshire, women ran 200. However, he maintained that this family structure weakened the Catholic community. He argued, “the bulk of the gentry’s strong Catholic conviction and activism was to be found in two types of gentry family, neither of them capable of maintaining large, stable family residences – women (widows or the recusant wives of conformists) and ‘vagrants’ who often moved house to avoid persecution.”704 In regards to the former type – the matriarchal household – to support this claim, he argued that a number of these households were abandoned, including that of Dorothy

703 Gerard, Autobiography, 213.
704 Hugh Aveling, “Catholic Households,” 86.
Lawson, following the death of the matriarch. True, John Lawson sold the famed St. Antony’s to Thomas Bonner, a council member in Newcastle in April 1653, 21 years after Dorothy’s death. Similarly, Battle was abandoned as a Catholic center following the death of Lady Magdalen Montague and her exploits barely fill one line on modern day placards at the popular tourist destination. While Aveling counts these households as weak since they fell into disuse after the death of the widow, this research suggest that they ceased to exist as Catholic strongholds primarily because the pillar of the household died. The fate of Battle and St. Antony’s seems to be a testament more towards the opportunities inherent in the marital status and gender of widows, rather than the limitations of both.

In reality, widows ran some of the most prominent Catholic centers for Mass and Jesuit meetings in post-Reformation England because their households were solitary, accessible, adaptable, and controlled. Their opportunity to host Mass, maintain a Catholic household, and catechize and care for their community were different from those of their married counterparts. The social structures that surrounded the life of a woman without a husband lent themselves to the solitude and protection necessary to maintain a clandestine religious community, and as will be seen in the following chapter, extend their influence abroad through their role in sustaining Catholicism through international connections.

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705 Aveling, “Catholic Households”, 93.
706 Declaration by Thomas Bonner of Newcastle upon Tyne, Alderman, Apr. 1 1653, at the North Yorkshire Record Office, ZRL 6-69.
CHAPTER FIVE:

SUSTAINING CATHOLICISM: A LINEAGE OF SURVIVAL

Seeing him dead, though she wept (for she truly loved him much) she was very present with herself ... and her first thoughts were to get her children to live with her (which she desired, in order to their being Catholics).

- The Lady Falkland, Her Life

In the early hours of a September morning in 1633 in Oxfordshire, Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland traveled nine miles in darkness from the deathbed of her estranged husband to gather four of her daughters previously withheld from her care. After obtaining her daughters, Cary then embarked on a scheme to kidnap her sons from Protestant guardianship. As a publically professed Catholic in a Protestant realm, Cary experienced separation from her Protestant husband and a loss of maternal rights to her children due to her faith. Upon her husband’s death, Cary pursued immediate action to obtain control of her children and work towards their Catholic conversion, with six eventually going to seminaries and convents abroad.

The actions of Lady Falkland in the dead of night reveal two things about a Catholic widow’s place in post-Reformation England. First, maternal authority over children was not universal, especially for Catholics, due to the state’s attempts to control recusant children. The Court of Wards stipulated that minor children of a widow would become wards of the crown until the age of 21 – a tactic frequently employed to root out Catholicism in English families. As a known Catholic with nine children under the age of 21 at her husband’s death, Cary’s actions had to be quick and calculated. The second point is inherent in her ability to procure her children. Her movements, free from the constraints of her husband, suggest that widowhood initiated a

newfound autonomy for Lady Falkland previously unavailable to her. This dichotomous mix of vulnerability and autonomy, perpetuated by Cary’s liminal status in society as a widow, created a small window of agency to influence the religious upbringing of her children.

Lady Falkland’s exploits present an extreme example of the ways Catholic widows confronted threats to their maternal authority. Although, Cary was not singular in her resolve to capitalize on the limitations and opportunities inherent in early modern gender norms. Over the past few decades, historians have acknowledged women who transcended both real and perceived restrictions of their gender to act for the cause of religion. In particular, the role of English Catholic women has been the topic of numerous works. Yet, women’s agency has yet to be fully examined through the lens of marital status, even though widows make up a majority of the women in such studies. While prevailing historiography predominantly portrays widows as part of a marginalized group, including the poor, never married, and elderly, the previous chapters have shown that widowhood in fact provided specific opportunities for religious action,

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710 The most frequently referenced English Catholic women are Dorothy Lawson, Lady Magdalen Montague, Margaret Clitherow, and Anne Howard. Three out of four of these women were widows at the height of their subversive actions. Amy M. Froide argues for an inclusion of marital status as a unit of analysis, through a focus on women who never married, in *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
despite and oftentimes owing to the societal limitations, legal ambiguities, and economic uncertainties of living without a husband. While the previous two chapters examined widows’ role in protecting and promoting Catholicism within England, this final chapter examines widows who sustained the faith in three ways that extended beyond the boundaries of England: the practice of sending children abroad for education, the protection of secret printing presses, and the act of patronage. Each of these acts were trans-border attempts to uphold the faith for future generations. This chapter argues that two competing structures of widowhood – legal vulnerability and power through autonomy – created a unique state of agency for Catholic widows who desired to help sustain the English Catholic community. The moment of change in marital status led many widows to take firm control of their children and send them to convents and seminaries abroad, use space and resources for printing presses and the dissemination of Catholic texts, and engage in patronage of Catholic institutions on the continent.

This final chapter is a capstone to an analysis of how marital status influenced religious agency. Chapter 3 examined widows who protected Catholicism, as shown through the secretive, exclusive, private, and internal act of harboring priests within the home. Protection through priest holes and maintaining a family priest focused on preserving Catholicism for the present in a clandestine fashion. Chapter 4 examined the role of widows in promoting Catholicism in the community, as shown through the holding of Mass within the house, catechizing neighbors, caring for the poor, and creating Catholic hubs for Jesuit priests. Promoting Catholicism within the community was an act that was inclusive, local, and external on the part of the Catholic widow and her household that necessitated a semi-permeable threshold to the household. It

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required an adapted conception of space, encouraged participation from trustworthy neighbors, and worked to preserve Catholicism on a local level for the present. This final chapter moves beyond the private and the local towards a third framework – an English Catholic community with porous national boundaries connected by faith and adaptive in their strategy to survive. In this way, the space within which these Catholic widows operated was not comprised of bricks and mortar, but was instead psychological and connected by religious beliefs. Unconfined by national boundaries, these widows participated in cross-Channel connections based on the similar goal to sustain English Catholicism. This chapter suggests that the widows’ households in England were a part of a larger international English Catholic network through local efforts to print secret Catholic material, supply convents and schools abroad with children from English Catholic households, and protect and sustain the Jesuit mission both within and outside of England through patronage.\textsuperscript{712} The action of sending children abroad differed from harboring priests and hosting clandestine Mass, because instead of working to protect and promote Catholicism in the present, it instead worked to sustain Catholicism for future generations.

While penal laws no doubt made the future for Catholicism in England appear bleak, efforts to sustain Catholicism on the part of English Catholics – harboring priests, catechizing the community, hosting Mass, patronizing religious communities, operating Catholic printing presses, and sending individuals to convents and seminaries abroad – suggests that English Catholics hoped for a future recatholicized England. By separating the family and sending children away to Catholic institutions, widows encouraged the practice of the Catholic faith into the next generation while supplying the English Catholic mission with missionary priests to fight

\textsuperscript{712} The entanglement of English Catholics with Catholic communities on the continent perhaps questions the nature of an “English” Catholic community. See John Bossy’s \textit{The English Catholic Community}. 

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for a future Catholic England. This analytical approach of examining the “future” of Catholicism through a trans-national community benefits from Liesbeth Corens work on relics in expatriate English Catholic communities and the preservation of a local Catholicism beyond geographical boundaries. Corens argues, “Institutions were not the sole means for collective belonging, and ‘community’ was not a physically locatable unit. It was constructed and defined by those who felt united together, and gave expression to their belonging not solely in their locality, but also through abstract ideas of unity and long-distance exchanges of letters, objects and prayers.”

While Corens examines the movement of relics, this chapter proposes that the movement of children and resources through patronage likewise facilitated a communal identity of English Catholicism beyond national borders – actions to which widowhood lent a unique sense of agency. Manipulating national boundaries in this way shaped a continuation of a Catholic past, created an outlet for English Catholic practice, and fashioned a catalyst for the rearing of future Catholics, which in turn revealed a confidence and hope for a future Catholic England.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first discusses widowhood, motherhood, and women’s role in the education of children while examining the limitations of sustaining Catholicism in the family. The chapter begins with a discussion of widowed motherhood and a mother’s role in a minor’s education. The ways motherhood changed following the death of a husband affected widows’ ability to be agents of change through their children. Following the historical and historiographical discussion of motherhood, widowhood, and education, the chapter will discuss the difficulties that arose for Catholics in providing a Catholic education,

namely through the practice of feudal wardship and the penal laws enacted against Catholics in
the late sixteenth century.

The second section examines three ways widows sustained Catholicism and how their
marital status influenced these actions. The first, and most substantial, is an analysis of widows
who sent children abroad and a discussion of how widowhood influenced such a practice. A
woman’s agency within her household as one who managed the helm in regards to the placement
of her children has not garnered adequate appreciation from historians, particularly when it
comes to a Catholic widow’s propensity to place her children abroad. No longer under the guard
of a Protestant or Papist husband, evidence shows that a number of Catholic widows took it upon
themselves to send children out of England to convent schools and seminaries, thereby
participating in a wider Catholic network that connected England with the continent in an effort
to continue Catholicism within the family. The second analysis examines the practice of
maintaining secret printing presses. Printing presses established continental connections through
a network of Catholic writings, while working to sustain Catholicism in England. The printing
press at Stonor Park will be the focus of this section. Finally, the third analysis examines the act
of patronage for Catholic institutions on the continent. The patronage of Anne Howard towards
a seminary in Ghent, in the Southern Netherlands, will serve as an example of the relationship
between widowhood and patronage. The final two analyses on printing presses and patronage,
while shorter than the first, serve to provide two additional examples of how widowhood
contributed towards the English Catholic community in an adaptable and transnational fashion.

A study on widows who helped sustain English Catholic expatriate communities by
sending children abroad contributes to recent work on the nature of early modern Catholicism
itself. Since the 1990s, historians have transformed the narrative of early modern Catholicism

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from an homogenous Tridentine Catholicism towards one that focuses on the local, complex, and innovative nature of the Church in both Catholic and Protestant states. In turn, historians of English Catholicism have begun to join the previously geographically inclusive narrative of an “English Catholic Community” by revealing the integrated nature of Catholic people, ritual, and space on both sides of the English Channel. One theme that has emerged in this growing historiography proposes that exiled English communities, along with influences from their local community, shaped English Catholicism at home. Catholic expatriate communities raised up missionaries, offered a Catholic education, printed Catholic material, and provided respite for refugees. They connected English men and women with an international Church of Rome and provided a necessary framework for English Catholics to worship and pursue ecclesiastical vocations, all the while inciting indignation over the religious condition of England. A second theme in recent historiography suggests that the relationship between English Catholicism and the Church of Rome was fluid and flexible, allowing Catholics to adapt to penal persecution at

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715 This is in contrast to previous narratives of the English Catholic community that treated it as geographically isolated within England, the most well-known being John Bossy’s *The English Catholic Community*, 1976.


home.\textsuperscript{719} Persecution necessitated a quick and purposeful ministry, spearheaded by Jesuits and seminary priests, and resulted in a complex relationship with Tridentine doctrine.\textsuperscript{720} Amidst these recent historiographical themes of English Catholic flexibility and international influence, this chapter suggests that Catholic widows uniquely assisted this process of adapting and sustaining Catholicism, different from their married and male counterparts.

\textbf{Widowhood, Motherhood, and Restrictions on Catholic Education}

Since the 1980s, the study of women and gender has uncovered the hierarchies of power that existed between men and women, based both on gender distinctions and on a study of the gendered language within society.\textsuperscript{721} This movement has markedly changed histories of the family. Instead of viewing the family as economic, social, or political units, as was done in the 1960s, histories now examine the individuals who occupied familial roles, as well as the relationships and interactions between them.\textsuperscript{722} There are now opportunities for a variety of experiences within the family home, not a homogenized picture of a unit of analysis. In the same way, this dissertation pushes the general proposition of women as wives and mothers and instead considers the variety of experiences available to different types of women – namely widows.

Around the 1980s, there was a shift within the history of the family that reflects one of growth, a

\textsuperscript{719} Alexandra Walsham has argued that the suppression experienced by Catholics in England both encouraged and hindered Tridentine Catholicism. Alexandra Walsham, “Translating Trent: English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation,” \textit{Historical Research} 78, 201 (2005): 288-310.


push for greater depth, and an acknowledgement of the variety of experiences available to both men and women.

Philippe Ariès’ *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* was arguably the first history of the family for the early modern period. In 1962, he argued that the idea of a childhood and family are relatively new ideas, and did not emerge in the modern psyche until the 18th century. During the early modern period, families were social and psychological units whose focus was sociability. The rise of the nation-state necessitated a shift from kinship-based loyalty towards a focus on patriotism, thereby removing the family as the primary social unit.723 The idea of the family as a political and social unit, and not one comprised of loving and nurturing individuals continued in Lawrence Stone’s 1977 work *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*. Stone maintained that the family experienced an evolution from an economic and impersonal grouping in the sixteenth century to a more tightly bonded grouping at the end of the eighteenth century.724 Similar to Ariès’ view of the family, Stone perceived the family unit within the sixteenth century as one that existed as more of an economic or social unit, not one centered on love and affection. Stone instead characterizes the sixteenth century family as a restricted patriarchal nuclear family.

Medievalists and early modern historians who pointed to clear evidence of loving marriages before 1700 refuted Stone’s suggestion that “affective individualism” did not become widely characteristic of marriage until the 18th century. In particular, the work of Ralph

723 Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*.
Houlbrooke and Alan MacFarlane challenged the views of Stone and Ariés in the 1980s.\footnote{Other works that have contradicted Stone’s notion of the family include Keith Wrightson, \textit{English Society, 1580-1680} (London: Hutchinson, 1982) and more recently, Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, eds. \textit{Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood} (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).} Houlbrooke’s \textit{The English Family} argued for continuity rather than change in the history of the family within the early modern period. He maintained that the picture of the early modern family is actually one that is recognizable to modern families. Houlbrooke's view of the early modern English family represents the emerging revisionist consensus that rejects the economic models of Lawrence Stone and Philippe Aries. By examining the individuals who functioned within the family – through an analysis of letters, diaries, autobiographies and epitaphs, which reveal attitudes of all members of the family – and not categorizing the family as a single unit, Houlbrooke suggested that early modern parents loved their children, made considerable emotional and financial investments in them, and mourned deeply when they died.\footnote{Ralph A. Houlbrooke, \textit{The English Family} (London: Pearson Education Ltd, 1984).} In a similar vein, Alan MacFarlane’s \textit{Marriage and Love in England} (1986) argues for continuity between early modern conceptions of families and modern, and maintains that marriages were built on love.\footnote{Alan MacFarlane, \textit{Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1840} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).}

Susan Amussen’s 1988 \textit{An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England} integrated gender into the discussion of the family, a practice that would gain speed in the 1990s. Her argument was that the only way to understand the social experience of early modern England is to examine the hierarchical relationships, based on gender, within both the family and at a local level.\footnote{Susan Amussen, \textit{An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England} (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988).} While the purpose of her work is to propose an analogy used to parallel the family and state by viewing them as two similar hierarchies, what her work introduced was an
examination of how gendered hierarchies functioned within the family. While some histories focused on specific gender roles in the family – the man in the public eye, the woman managing the private household – what followed in the 1990s was an influx of histories written about gender roles that defied traditional boundaries.\(^{729}\) These histories exposed the possibility that men and women functioned within culturally constructed roles that were in constant processes of negotiation, much like local hierarchies. This possibility of fluctuation between authority and power extended into the 2000s, most prominently in Bernard Capp’s *When Gossips Meet*, a discussion of women’s agency within their homes and communities in the face of patriarchy.\(^{730}\) In addition, Amanda Flather argues in *Gender and Space in Early Modern England*, “Men and women might accept, negotiate, manipulate or even ignore normative boundaries just as they do today.”\(^{731}\) From the 1960s to today, histories of the family have evolved from viewing them as single economic and social units devoid of emotion, to complex, individual relationships between men and women that could be negotiated and were recognizable to families of today. This profound shift is most clearly articulated in Garthine Walker’s quotation of Lawrence Stone’s work, and her subsequent rebuttal. She writes, “Early modern women, he [Stone] concluded, were ‘as submissive and dependent as the conduct books suggested that they ought to be’.”\(^{732}\) Walker continues, “Feminist scholarship and work influenced by it has since challenged


the view that early modern women simply internalised patriarchal codes, stressing instead that women exercised greater or lesser amounts of agency in negotiating their position both in and outside the household.”

This push to examine individuals within families, particularly those who crossed normative gender roles and boundaries, has paralleled a rise in the history of the widow within the last decade – a family member who possessed remarkable independence and authority in a patriarchal society.

Incorporating the experience of widows is essential to understanding the history of the family, since not all families were made of a two-parent nuclear household – a fact that remains relevant today. In fact, Vivian Brodsky shows that a “majority of London households were constantly changing in composition,” either from the death of parents, spouses, or children, thereby resulting in shorter marriages, remarriages, and mixed families. Viewing families as homogenous units dangerously ignores the variety of experiences available in alternate forms of families. Of course, even in the examination of widowhood, there are varieties of factors to consider – age, social status, and financial security being three of the most influential. Each determined the amount of freedom widows enjoyed, the perception they maintained in society, and the degree to which they could wield power in a community. Because of these three factors, there are two camps of widows in historiography: the widow as vulnerable and the widow as powerful. Much like the cultural perception of widows, as discussed in chapter two, rested on a dichotomy of the merry and the pious widow, historians too have categorized widows as either in need of assistance and thereby reliant on kin and community, or as economically strong and

independent women.\textsuperscript{735} This purpose of this chapter, and indeed this dissertation, is to show the possibilities inherent within this complicated and polar relationship of dependence and independence, defenselessness and influence.

For those widows who had children, the tension between these competing personas in society had a profound impact on their role as a mother. Generally, a mother maintained control over the upbringing and welfare of her children, both boys and girls, until the age of seven. At that point, wealthier families entrusted male children to a tutor or schoolmaster, while the mother still maintained control over her daughters’ education and training to become a good wife and mother.\textsuperscript{736} Families of the lower class continued to keep their children in the home, or sent them to live with other relations. When a husband died, widows generally were appointed guardianship or wardship of her children, although this was not always the case.\textsuperscript{737} This shift from wife to widow changed the role of motherhood for a woman because she became the sole provider in terms of her children’s education, guidance, protection, and placement in society. The absence of a fatherly figure and protector drove some women to remarry and others to seek help from kin to care for their children. Still others, as will be the subject of this chapter, used this power vacuum in the family to foster their religious authority over their children and raise

\textsuperscript{735} For studies of widows that portray them as in need of assistance, particularly older widows, thereby discussing age, see Lynn Botelho, “The old woman’s wish: widows by the family fire? Widows’ old age provisions in rural England, 1500-1700,” \textit{The History of the Family} 7 (2002): 59-78. For studies of widows as strong, independent women, see the work of Robert J. Kalas, including “The Noble Widow’s Place in the Patriarchal Household: The Life and Career of Jeanne de Gontault,” \textit{The Sixteenth Century Journal} 24, 3 (1993): 519-539 and “Noble Widows and Estate Management during the French Wars of Religion,” \textit{The Sixteenth Century Journal} 39, 2 (2008): 357-370. Kalas’ focus on individual widows who managed estates reveals the opportunity to discover widows that defy boundaries by studying individual women, as is the purpose of this dissertation. Even Christiane Kaplisch-Zuber’s work on remarriage shows the power a woman held over her family in her decision to remarry. “The Cruel Mother’: Maternity, Widowhood, and Dowry in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” in \textit{Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy}, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, 117-131 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).


\textsuperscript{737} Patricia Crawford, \textit{Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England} (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2004), 87. The impact of the Court of Wards and the possibility to lose guardianship, particularly due to a Catholic widow’s religion, will be discussed in this chapter.
them as Catholics. Histories have acknowledged women who transcended the limitations of their
gender to act for the cause of religion.\footnote{Wiesner, “Beyond Women and the Family,” and Crawford, \textit{Women and Religion in England}.} For Catholic widows, the competing personas of vulnerable and powerful became an opportunity to sustain Catholicism through the placement of their children in Catholic institutions abroad. Widows had this ability as the sole caregivers and guardians of their children – thereby making their status as widows an important part of their agency. Although not all widows sent children abroad, not all children sent abroad were sent by widows, and a variety of factors could influence this action (e.g. age, wealth, a husband’s will, social standing, legal limitations as a Catholic, etc.); this research uncovers individual widows who, through their marital status, enacted change in their families. Although, the Court of Wards and penal laws, particularly in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, restricted such efforts to raise Catholic children.

\textit{The Restriction of Wardship: A Struggle for Control}

While mothers certainly had a role in the care and future of their children, the practice of feudal wardship within early modern England stymied guardianship and control in the nuclear family, particularly within the families of Catholic widows. Rooted in the feudalism of medieval Europe, the notion of early modern wardship revitalized the practice of a Lord assuming guardianship of a tenant’s heir and their property, should the tenant die. The said Lord would be in charge of the child’s care, protection, education, and marriage prospects. After years of disuse, Henry VIII, under advisement of Thomas Cromwell, revived royal wardship and created the Court of Wards in 1540. The Court was a reaction to the dissolution of the monasteries and the ensuing feudal economic opportunities that arose with the high rate of land purchases from the
The Court of Wards stipulated that when a peer’s death left a minor heir, that child became a ward of the crown. Until the age of 21, the crown was in charge of both the education and marriage of the said child. Arguably, the Court of Wards was created to control and maintain the economic prospects inherent in the transfer of hereditary property to a minor. Most of the time, guardianship was sold by the crown, along with the right of marriage, as an additional form of revenue. Oftentimes, guardianship was sold to the widow. While the practice was widely unpopular and abandoned at the onset of the Civil War (1642-1651), its intrusive nature during Elizabeth’s reign under the charge of Lord Burghley proved particularly dangerous for Catholics.

During the 1590s, amidst the threat of Catholics both at home and abroad, the Privy Council took an increasing interest in guardianship. Joel Hurstfield argues that feudal wardship was a way to keep track of Catholics, especially those who went overseas. Fear of the Court of Wards was particularly acute amidst Catholic widows whose children fell under the purview of the Court. Jan Broadway rightly claims, “Among the most disadvantaged of early modern gentlewomen, regardless of religion, was the widowed mother whose young son was heir to a large estate… Recusant mothers had particular fears, because their religion was liable to

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740 Hurstfield, *The Queen’s Wards*, 16.


742 For a more recent discussion of the Court of Wards, see Mark Jervis, “The Court of Wards and Liveries and the Roman Catholic Gentry in Yorkshire and Sussex,” *Northern History* 50, 1 (2013): 20-38. Jervis argues that the Court of Wards was used as a way for the Crown to “discriminate against, or exploit, Catholics for its own fiscal and/or political benefit,” 24-5.

743 See A.C.F. Beale’s brief discussion of circumventing the queen’s right of wardship regarding Elizabeth Vaux in *Education Under Penalty: English Catholic Education From the Reformation to the Fall of James II, 1547-1689* (London: University of London, 1963), 60, 63.
undermine what maternal rights contemporary society was prepared to recognize.”

The vulnerability of a widowed Catholic mother under the Court of Wards is best exemplified by the experiences of Agnes Throckmorton and Anne Howard.

Agnes Throckmorton (née Wilford) married John Throckmorton in 1589 and bore him nine children before his death in 1604. Agnes’ position as a married woman protected her Catholic faith, a coverture that vanished with her husband’s death. John’s death left a minor heir, Robert Throckmorton, to his 70-year-old grandfather, Thomas Throckmorton. Under penal laws against Catholics and inheritance laws under the Court of Wards, Agnes struggled to maintain and preserve the inheritance of her eldest son, as well as her other children. In 1608, Thomas attempted to negotiate the marriage of Robert without the advice or knowledge of Agnes herself. The disgust and anger felt by Agnes towards this loss of maternal authority over her son is clearly expressed in a letter to her father-in-law, assumed to be written in 1607. She wrote:

I harde from my father that you wer very forwarde in speech for the bestowing of him, wich did not a littell greave me to conceve by your letter that I shoulde be made astranger in thus procedinges…I toke it unkindlye my sun shoulde be towards marige and I not made pryvi of it, because I never harde of it from you, beinge so longe in hande, and you may coceve your self wether it wolde not greve a mother that hath broght a childe into the worlde with grefe, paine, and danger of

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745 Christine Newman examines the “loophole” to religious conformity enjoyed by married Catholic women. A Catholic wife with a conforming husband benefited from a façade of outward compliance, leaving her free to do and believe as she pleased in the confines of her own home. Newman, “The Role of Women”, 11.

746 Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow”, 123.

747 It is worth noting that of her children, two went abroad; Margaret became a nun at Louvain and the youngest son, George, entered the English college at Douai in 1619. Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow”, 139. The Chronicle of St. Monica’s in Louvain credits Agnes Throckmorton for the Catholic upbringing she provided for her children. It states, “His wife, daughter of Mr. Wilford of Essex, who after the death of her husband continued a widow, doing many good deeds in inducing of Protestants to be reconciled, receiving and relieving of priests, bringing up her children in the fear of God.” The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica’s in Louvain 1548-1625, ed. Dom Adam Hamilton, OSB (Edinburgh and London, 1904), 120.
my life, to have aney caus geven to thinke that I shoulde be made a stranger in his bestoinge.\textsuperscript{748}

_I heard from my father that you were very forward in speech for the bestowing of him, which did not a little grieve me to conceive by your letter that I should be made a stranger in these proceedings....I took it unkindly my son should be towards marriage and I not made privy of it, because I never heard of it from you, being so long in hand, and you may conceive yourself whether it would not grieve a mother that hath brought a child into the world with grief, pain, and danger of my life, to have any cause given to think that I should be made a stranger in his bestowing._

While the initial marriage negotiations failed, four years later Robert married Dorothy Fortescue in 1612, a daughter of Sir Francis Fortescue – a Protestant politician and High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, after continuing his education abroad at the advice of his grandfather, Thomas Throckmorton.\textsuperscript{749} Feudal wardship threatened the control Agnes Throckmorton struggled to maintain following the death of her husband, and placed the future of her eldest son in the hands of her father-in-law, which in turn denied her maternal authority.\textsuperscript{750} Jan Broadway argues, “The example of Agnes Throckmorton provides a case study of the tensions experienced by widowed recusant mothers; tensions that could threaten family cohesion that nurtured the survival of their faith within a hostile environment.”\textsuperscript{751} Throckmorton’s story, and indeed Broadway’s analysis, highlights the disadvantages of widowhood and suggests how easily maternal authority could be threatened by family and the state. Throckmorton’s sheltered status as a wife disappeared with her husband’s death, thus, under penal laws against Catholics and inheritance laws under the Court of Wards, she struggled to maintain and preserve the inheritance of her eldest son, as well as her other children.

\textsuperscript{748} Agnes Throckmorton to Mr. Thomas Throckmorton, 1607, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR 1998/Box 60/Folder 1/1.
\textsuperscript{749} Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow”, 135.
\textsuperscript{750} Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow”, 135.
\textsuperscript{751} Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow”, 125.
While Agnes presents an example of a widow who was directly impacted by the Court of Wards and a Protestant family member, Anne Howard presents an example of a widow who faced a direct threat from Elizabeth I. Anne Howard (née Dacre), countess of Arundel and wife of the sainted Philip Howard of Arundel, faced challenges from Queen Elizabeth herself over the guardianship of her children. Her husband, Philip Howard, died of dysentery in the Tower in 1595 after having been imprisoned for treason since 1585. Philip’s imprisonment was in reaction to the seizure of a series of treasonous letters written to Cardinal Allen. The fact that his father, the 4th Duke of Norfolk, was executed in 1572 for attempting to marry Mary Queen of Scots did little to help the esteem of the Howard family in the eyes of the Protestant Queen. With a father-in-law executed for treason, and a husband arrested and imprisoned for the same, Anne Howard was caught in a precarious position as a woman whose male relations damaged her reputation with the crown.

Anne’s vulnerable position emanates through the words of a letter she wrote to Lord Burghley in November of 1589, four years into her husband’s imprisonment. In the letter, she begs for compassion on her financial state:

My very good Lord my case being so miserable, that extremtye inforceth me to crave succor I am bold to commend my necessity to your Lordshipps favorable consideration, whom as I have ever found a most honorable frind of so I hope still to enioy the benefit of your accustomed curesyes. So it is good my Lord that since Michelmas was twelmonethes I have never received any penye of suche allowances as I usually had for the clothing of my selfe or my pore children nor for anye other charges of Phisicke, and suche like occasions which my diseased and weake body doth with continuall payne almost dayly enforce me to use. Also my good Lord the wages of my poore servants are due for more then a whole yeare, and I standing wholly upon hir Maiestis gracious reliefe, am no way hable to discharge them without your Lo. Goodness and therefore I

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most humbly beseeche your good Lo. to take some compassion of my most desolate estate, the reliefe wherof I know not howe to procure.\textsuperscript{753}

Following Philip Howard’s imprisonment and death, the Howard family was in financial ruin. The Crown confiscated all family estates, houses, and possessions, which forced Anne to sell family jewels, borrow money, and live off a meager wage of eight pounds a week.\textsuperscript{754}

Elizabeth’s disdain for the Howard family, stemming from a treasonous Catholic past, influenced Elizabeth’s attempts to obtain control of the Catholic children of the Howards. Before imprisonment, Anne and Philip had two children, a daughter Elizabeth in 1583 who died of tuberculosis at the age of 15, and a son in 1585, Thomas Howard, the heir and fourteenth earl of Arundel.\textsuperscript{755} At Philip’s death, Thomas was 10 and a minor, therefore his guardianship fell into the Court of Wards, which Elizabeth was keen to exact. Elizabeth’s treatment of Anne Howard is a clear example of Elizabeth’s desire to control Catholics through wardship. Anne’s biographer wrote:

\begin{quote}
Queen Elizabeth intended several times to have taken him away from her after his Father’s death, and given his education to some Protestant as then the custome was: but by her diligent endeavour it never took effect; and she was resolv’d rather to have sent him secretly into some forraign country with hazard both of his person, he being then weak and sickly, and her incurring the Queen’s highest displeasure, than to have expos’d him to the danger of perversion.\textsuperscript{756}
\end{quote}

Anne’s reaction to Elizabeth’s attempts to take away her son reveals a tactic, undertaken by many widows, to circumvent the Court of Wards. By sending the child abroad, she would have


\textsuperscript{754} Duke of Norfolk, E.M., The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, and of Anne Dacres, his wife, ed. from the original manuscript (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1857), 190. Also, see Lansdowne MS 45/82 at the British Library for an account of the houses, lands, and possessions of Philip, Earl of Arundel, attainted for high treason, from 1588 to 1592.


\textsuperscript{756} Lives, 226.
taken control out of the queen’s hands, maintained power over the education and upbringing of her own child, and ensured Catholic survival within the family. However, Anne never sent her son abroad. Instead, her son converted to Protestantism. Her biographer writes:

   So that on her side as much was done as might be for his education and continuance in the Catholick Religion, in which he did remain some years after his marriage and departure from her government till partly through fear, partly through desire of favour with the King (meeting also with some bad Counsellors) he accommodated himself by degrees to the times much more than he ought to have done to the incredible grief of his good Mother, who in all convenient occasions did ever give him the best counsel she could for the safety of his Soul, and return to God’s Church.\textsuperscript{757}

Thomas Howard was raised to be Catholic, yet he chose to become a Protestant and subsequently gained favor with James I. In 1604, Philip Howard’s title was restored to Thomas, and he was permitted entry into court. In 1607, James I attended the baptism of Thomas’ son and in 1608, Thomas repurchased Arundel House in London for £4,000.\textsuperscript{758} Howard continued the uphill climb to acquire favor with the Crown, reclaim his titles, and regain his family lands and possessions. The catalyst for Thomas’ newfound favor was his public conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism in 1616. Once Thomas took communion in the Chapel Royal at Whitehall, he was immediately appointed to the Privy Council.\textsuperscript{759} While beneficial to his political aspirations, this religious conversion created a wedge in Thomas’ relationship with his Catholic, priest-harboring mother. In a letter transcribed by her confessor in the biography of her life, Anne wrote to her son:

   And with all earnestness [I] pray you for God and your own Soul’s sake to think seriously upon your present state, and consider how little you have gain’d either in honor, wealth, reputation, or true contentment of mind by the course which

\textsuperscript{757} Lives, 226-227.
\textsuperscript{759} Robinson, The Dukes of Norfolk, 101.
now many years you have followed, contrary to the breeding and education I gave you.  

Anne ends the letter with the assertion that she prayed for his “speedy” return to the Catholic Church.

Apart from letters and evidence of Thomas’ political climb due to his religious break from his Catholic upbringing, three divergent portraits of Anne Howard suggest visual evidence of a personal separation between son and mother. The images below are three contemporary, yet starkly different, images of the personage of Anne Howard. The first portrait shows Anne in three-quarter length, standing, wearing black robes and holding a wooden staff (Figure 5.1). The painting is inscribed with the identity of the sitter, although the artist and date of production are unknown. According to Southby’s auction website, an anonymous artist of the English School of the seventeenth century painted the oil on canvas portrait. The similarities in clothing, the presence of wrinkles, the detail in the necklace and the fact that Anne is holding a cane suggests that she sat in person for the oil painting later in her life, although her exact age is unknown. At first glance, the portrait has numerous similarities with an undated sketch completed by Wenceslaus Hollar, including wrinkles around the eyes and lips, and clothing that is almost identical (Figure 5.2). The matching clothing in both pieces is not unusual, as her biographer wrote, “for both in the attire of her head, in her ruffs, gowns, and all other things she kept so

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760 *Lives*, 228-229.
761 This brief analysis benefits from studies of memory and remembrance, which show that visual and textual representations of a single individual are laden with a myriad of political, religious, and social motivations, which can in turn influence omissions and revisions in the act of remembering. For studies of memory, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); articles in Supplement 11 of *Past and Present* (2016); Carina Johnson, David Leubke, Marjorie Plummer, and Jesse Spohnholz, eds, *Archeologies of Confession: Writing the German Reformation, 1517-2017* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017); and Judith Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
762 This painting of the matron currently hangs in Arundel Castle in the west end of the Picture Gallery on the first floor, acting as the official representation of Anne in the ancient family home.
constantly the same fashion.” Yet in contrast, the second image portrays Howard as a scowling woman presented with an obvious and unsightly blemish. Perhaps this is an actual representation of old age, or a cultural appraisal of widowhood, a mark added at a later date, or even a religious attack against Catholics, since Wenceslaus Hollar, a decidedly Protestant etcher, created it. While the true motivations behind the divergent portraits are unknown, what is curious is that Thomas Howard, the son of the subject, was the primary patron of Wenceslaus Hollar.

Hollar met Thomas Howard in Cologne in 1636. Their relationship deepened when Howard, an avid art collector, set up lodgings for Hollar at Arundel House, which led to Hollar marrying the servant of the countess of Arundel in 1641. Thus, the artist who created the unflattering drawing of Anne was a close acquaintance of the subject’s son. Two pieces of evidence suggest that the mole was an addition, and not a truthful representation of Anne Howard. First, written descriptions of Anne’s face exist from her biographer, who noted, “even to her last sickness her countenance was comely and her colour and complexion more fresh than many women’s is at forty.” Admittedly, while this is a useful depiction, a fresh complexion does not necessarily negate the presence of a mole, nor does the biographer’s failure to describe the mole mean that it was absent. More convincing is the fact that Hollar’s sketch was not done in person, since he met the Howard family six years after Anne’s death. Instead, Hollar notes at the bottom of his drawing that he drew his representation from a sketch by Lucas Vorsterman. Yet the only surviving sketch by Vorsterman of Anne Howard contains a resolutely unblemished representation of the Catholic matron (Figure 5.3).

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763 Lives, 272.
765 Lives, 270.
While we cannot know why the mole was added to the drawing, what is evident is that there are two competing perceptions of the widow.\textsuperscript{766} Unquestionably, the most unkind depiction belonged to an artist intimately connected to the matron’s son, a man who painstakingly worked to garner favor with a Protestant king despite his filial connection to a priest-harboring, openly Catholic mother. Howard’s reentry into political life after the bitter treatment of his mother, father, and grandfather on religious grounds, together with his own Protestant leanings, signals a break both religiously and politically from his upbringing. Perhaps it is unfair to judge a filial relationship based on one etching. Thomas visited his mother close to her death in 1630, and even brought with him a Catholic physician from London for her comfort.\textsuperscript{767} Yet, the Protestant son clamoring for political and financial gain in a Protestant nation was the patron of a Protestant artist whose portrait of the widowed mother of his patron is decidedly more grotesque than other representations.

The visual and textual evidence surrounding Anne Howard suggests two things. First, not all children followed the religious convictions of their mothers. Thomas Howard serves as an antithesis to the examples provided later in the chapter. His actions show that the efforts of

\textsuperscript{766} There is another seventeenth-century painting that features a large black mole on the left temple of an older woman, and that is of Christina of Denmark by an anonymous Flemish painter. See Christiane Hertel, “Engaging Negation in Hans Holbein the Younger’s Portrait of Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan” in \textit{Women and Portraits in Early Modern Europe: Gender, Agency, Identity}, ed. Andrea Pearson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 116. Since Christina at the time was also a widow, perhaps there is a correlation or pattern between facial blemishes, old age, and widowhood. Besides early modern conceptions of moles signifying the entrance of the devil into an individual’s soul, their correlation to the “witch’s mark” in witchcraft interrogations, and later 18\textsuperscript{th} century beauty patches or \textit{mouches} fashionable in France, there is very little literature on moles in early modern portraiture, see Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, \textit{Women and Gender In Early Modern Europe} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 269. Anne Howard’s disappearing mole presents a potential avenue of future analysis into moles, portraiture of widows, defamation of Catholic portraiture, and examinations of how cultural stereotypes of widows as poor, old, and grotesque infiltrated portraiture (see chapter two).

\textsuperscript{767} \textit{Lives}, 255.
Figure 5.1: Portrait of Anne Dacre, artist unknown. Reproduced by kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Norfolk. On display at Arundel Castle, west end of the Picture Gallery on 1st floor.

Figure 5.2: Engraving of Anne Dacre, Countess of Arundel by Wenceslaus Hollar, 17th century. Public domain.

Figure 5.3: Sketch of Anne Howard, Countess of Arundel, drawn by Lucas Vorsterman, 1610-1675. British Museum, 1940.0413.71.
Catholic mothers sometimes were ignored and they reveal the complexity inherent in familial relationships, religion, and political ambition. While the visual evidence of the break Thomas experienced from his mother remains open to interpretation, it is possible the added mole to a scowling face was meant to both literally and figuratively blot and tarnish the remembrance of a woman whose actions and affiliations in life damaged the prospects of her family. Second, the Court of Wards was a real threat to a Catholic widow, particularly of a higher social status, on the wrong side of penal legislation and royal favor. Elizabeth’s attempts to gain control of Thomas Howard resulted in Anne’s purchase of guardianship and her inheritance at a high cost. Unlike other widows in this chapter, Anne was unable to send her son abroad, although her biographer was quick to report that Howard desired secretly to send him away to prevent a Protestant upbringing. The Court of Wards was only one of many strategies used by the crown to control the movement of children overseas. In addition, Parliament addressed the dangers of Catholics going abroad with a string of Penal Laws beginning in 1563 that worked to prevent the movement of Catholics, children in particular, further endangering and restricting widows bent on raising Catholic children.

**Penal Restrictions on the Education, Movement, and Ideas of Catholics**

The influx of seminary and Jesuit priests in the 1570s and 1580s ushered in a watershed in the parliamentary agenda against Catholicism, which directly affected Catholics desirous to educate their children in the faith, including widows. While Elizabeth I and her advisors once expected that the popery of the past would simply die out, this turning point initiated an offensive attack against those who would endanger the conformity and loyalty of English
individuals who heard or performed Mass, harbored priests, refused to attend Protestant services, or engaged in other Catholic rituals could suffer fines, imprisonment, or even death for their treasonous actions. This agenda, as outlined in chapter one, extended to the children of Catholics through the control of education. In 1563, Parliament restricted who could teach children and where, thereby controlling what could be taught. The law required all public and private teachers to take the Oath of Supremacy in an attempt to rid the realm of Catholic schoolmasters. A.C.F. Beales argues, “The English Reformation was in fact a cataclysm for Catholic education, within one generation. The educational ‘system’, of parish schools and grammar schools and the two universities, still complete when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, was totally lost to Catholicism twenty years later, when Elizabeth I required of all teachers the oaths of supremacy and conformity.” However, the actual enforcement of such laws was slow in coming. Until the Northern Rebellion in 1569 and Elizabeth’s excommunication in 1570, Catholic nobility could hire private tutors to educate their children in the privacy of their own home, or simply send their children abroad.

The 1570s and 1580s saw increased legislation geared towards keeping Catholics in the country in an effort to prevent an overseas Catholic education. In 1571, an act restricted travel overseas by requiring a license. In 1577, Parliament went on the offensive and began to compile lists of Catholic schoolmasters and recusant children. With the arrival of the Jesuits in the early 1580s to English shores, Lord Burghley in particular honed in on the threat posed by

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772 Beales, *Education Under Penalty*, 68.
children going overseas to Catholic seminaries. In 1584, Burghley put forward a plan to take Catholic children hostage under the guise of education. In a memorandum to Elizabeth in 1583, titled *Advice in Matters of Religion and State*, Burghley wrote that the queen should “make their parents in every shire send their children to be virtuously brought up at a certain place for that end appointed.” For those who did not, he suggested, “you shall, under cover of education, have them as hostages for their parents’ fidelities.” Burghley’s idea proposed to take children hostage from their recusant parents at the age of seven, in order to ensure a Protestant education financed by the sequestering of one-third of recusant parents’ lands. However, Burghley’s idea to kidnap recusant children proved too extreme for Parliament and was set aside. Clare Asquith argues, “Given the problems of enforcing the scheme in a country where so many of the population were Catholic, it is not surprising that the idea was dropped; but it is one indication of Burghley’s shrewd grasp of the importance of education in uprooting the old religion and silencing opposition to the new.” Instead, Parliament drafted an all-encompassing act in 1585, the “Act Against Jesuits and Seminaries”, that directly dealt with efforts to sustain Catholicism both in England and abroad. This act required that any Jesuit, seminary priest, or ecclesiastic ordained, or set to be ordained overseas, must return to England, and within two days of their return, take the oath either before the bishop of the diocese or two justices of the peace in the

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773 As quoted in Beales, *Education Under Penalty*, 58. For the original memorandum, see Somers Tract IV 1752, i.101-8 at the British Library, London.
arrived county. Failure to do so meant the offender would be considered a traitor to the crown and he would suffer the penalty of high treason.\footnote{776}{“Act Against Jesuits and Seminaries”, in Documents Illustrative of English Church History, eds. Henry Gee and W.J. Hardy (London: MacMillan and Co., 1914), 487. Also, see A Proclamation for revocation of sundrie her Majesties subjects remaining beyond the seas, under colour of studie and yet living contrarie to the Lawes of God and of the Realm, 1582, at The Keep: East Sussex Record Office, RYE 47/24/17.}

In addition, children were banned from going abroad without a special license. While this section of the act did not specifically single out Catholics, its placement within the “Act Against Jesuits and Seminaries” couched its overarching agenda as controlling and keeping Catholics and children of Catholics within the realm. Together, this act forbade Catholics from sending children overseas, and it required those already overseas to return to England and swear an oath of allegiance, thereby closing the borders for Catholics and effectively cutting them off from any international Catholic network. The act stated:

\begin{quote}
It shall not be lawful for any person of or under her highness’s obedience, at any time after the said forty days, during her majesty’ life (which God long preserve) to send his or her child, or other person, being under his or her government, into any the parts beyond the seas out of her highness’s obedience, without special licence of her majesty, or of four of her highness’s privy council, under their hands in that behalf first had or obtained upon pain to forfeit and lose for every such their offence the sum of one hundred pounds.\footnote{777}{“Act Against Jesuits and Seminaries,” 488.}
\end{quote}

This “new persecuting law” as so named in the Diaries of the English College, Douay, a collection of previously unpublished documents from the English College, made it treasonous to be abroad as a priest and fined a crippling sum for sending a child to be educated abroad as a Catholic.\footnote{778}{Knox, Douay Diaries, lxxx.} By 1585, Catholics in the English realm were forbidden from educating their children in England as Catholic and banned from sending them elsewhere to obtain such an education. The 1585 Act extended beyond closing borders for the movement of individuals. It also prohibited any potential monetary support for seminaries, colleges, or individuals abroad:
And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, if any person under her majesty’s subjection or obedience shall at any time after the end of the said forty days…contribute any money or other relief to or for any Jesuit, seminary priest, or such other priest, deacon, or religious or ecclesiastical person, as is aforesaid, or to or for the maintenance or relief of any college of Jesuits, or seminary already erected or ordained, or hereafter to be erected or ordained, in any the parts beyond the seas, or out of this realm in any foreign parts, or of any person then being of or in any the same colleges or seminaries, and not returned into this realm with submission, as in this Act is expressed, and continuing in the same realm: that then every such person so offending for the same offence shall incur the danger and penalty of a Praemunire…

Catholics who sent money abroad and acted as patrons to seminaries or Catholic institutions were judged as submitting to papal jurisdiction over the supremacy of the monarch. From 1585 on, Parliament’s agenda when it came to Catholicism was clear. Any efforts to sustain Catholicism for the future, both through the education of children or through monetary support, were considered treason and came with the penalty of a heavy fine or imprisonment.

The enforcement of these laws failed to measure up to the parliamentary agenda to eradicate the Catholic education of English children. The continued support of Catholic institutions overseas, through the movement of people and money from English Catholics, perpetuated anxiety about Catholics into the following decades. In a 1596 letter from William James, the Dean of Durham, to William Cecil, James writes, “The bringing up of recusants’ children in their parents’ errors is too general, and if not reformed will grow very dangerous.”

A letter written in 1620 from one Barnebye to the archbishops of Canterbury and York discusses the danger arising from the education of children in seminaries abroad. He himself was drawn from Oxford to seminaries beyond the seas by a kinsman, yet he returned to England. He

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780 As quoted in Beales, *Education Under Penalty*, 64.
proposed that Catholic children be sequestered with Protestant kinsmen, “for the good of manie.”

From 1563 onwards, there was a general fear amidst the Protestant government of the continuance of Catholicism through the education of recusant children, both abroad and at home. Women in particular were seen as potentially dangerous because of their role in the household. A letter from the Earl of Shrewsbury to the archbishop of Canterbury, dated 1592/3 argues for the “restraint of such and principall gentleweomen, wives, widowes, and others as have ben found to be obstinate recusants….their children and families by their example have ben corrupted in religion…they maie be kepte from further infecting others.” Mothers had the potential to corrupt, infect, and cause disorder amidst their families, particularly with their children.

Oftentimes, this corruption arose through the influence of a Jesuit priest, as described in *The Jesuits Intrigues*, an anti-Catholic propaganda piece translated from French by the bishop of London, Henry Compton. The author wrote, “They [Jesuits] take upon them to wrong a great many private families, who though wealthy and noble, have been brought to utter ruin by the Jesuits engrossing widows’ estates, and by indirect means, *inveigling young gentelmen into their*

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783 *The Jesuites intrigues with the private instructions of that society to their emissaries. The first, translated out of a book privately printed at Paris. The second, lately found in manuscript in a Jesuites closet after his death. Both sent with a letter from a gentleman at Paris, to his friend in London* (London: Rose and Crown, 1669), *Early English Books Online*, Web, August 2017. This source is discussed at length in chapter two. Henry Compton, a bishop of London whose other publications indicate a strong anti-Catholic bent, translated *The Jesuites Intrigues* from French and published it in 1669. The pamphlet feigns authenticity as direct instructions from the Order to Jesuits in its introductory letter, which cites that the manuscript was recovered amongst the papers of a deceased Jesuit. Due to its publication by an anti-Catholic Protestant, it is more likely anti-Jesuit propaganda rather than a detailed account of Jesuit strategy. Whether it is a true account from a Jesuit, or a piece of propaganda, its frequent discussion of widows in the text reveals that there were traceable connections between Jesuits and widows. While published in 1669, it can be assumed that the actions discussed in the pamphlet took place years earlier, and its contents were written at an earlier date.
order, that have been sent to their colleges for education.” This image of Jesuits preying on widows could be an allusion to the Bible passage in Mark 12, in which Jesus warned followers to watch for Pharisees who “devour widows houses,” as discussed in chapter two. However, other passages in Intrigues suggest that the perceived relationship with widows could be a more literal statement on Jesuit strategy. The author later satirically writes:

If any of our Women-friends, that are Widows, or marryed, chance only to have Daughters, we must neatly perswade them to put them into a Nunnery with some small Portion, that the rest of the Inheritance may be ours. So for Sons, when they have any; we must do all we can, to get them into Our Society, by terrifying them first, and bringing them under perfect obedience to their Parents. Afterwards we must make them despise all things here below, and shew them the greater Duty of following Jesus Christ, who calls them, than their Parents, if they regard their souls. It will likewise be a sort of Sacrifice to Our Order, to draw in one of the younger Children, unknown to his Friends; whom we must take care presently to send to some Novitiate, a great way off, having first given notice to the General.

This passage, at first singling out widows and then including all mothers, insinuates that it was the perceived strategy of Jesuits to persuade women to send their children abroad to join the order or, at the least, support the order financially. The passage continues:

If a Widow has sons and daughters, that will not be induced to a Monastick Life; the Superiour must for the first default, blame the Confessour, and put another in his room, that may be more likely to bring the business about. But if that fail; then must the good woman be perswaded to make money of all that she has in her power; and give it us, for the expiation of her own sins, and her husbands.

This source, while perhaps not a first-hand account of actual dealings between women and Jesuits, does show that there was a perceived correlation between Jesuit priests, widows, and the

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784 Jesuites Intrigues, 10. Italics in original.
785 Mark 12:38-40. Deans, preachers and clergymen frequently compared Jesuits to the lecherous Pharisees of the New Testament within their apologies for the Church of England. The image of Pharisees preying on the weak, most notably on widows, was a favorite reference amidst Protestant attacks against Jesuits.
786 Jesuites Intrigues, 47.
787 The Jesuites Intrigues, 47.
The relationship between Jesuits and widows in this source, together with their frequent interaction in early modern autobiographies, biographies, and state papers, suggests that there was enough of an association between the two to write about the relationship as satire, suggesting that widows had a noticeable role within the movement of children across the Channel. While penal laws against Catholic education, together with the operational Court of Wards, constrained widows’ efforts to raise Catholic children, these legal restrictions also birthed an adaptive strategy, unique to widowhood, to combat the elimination of Catholicism in England.

**Widowhood and Efforts to Sustain Catholicism: Education, Printing, and Patronage**

Despite the heavy weight of penal laws attempting to prevent the survival of Catholicism in England, families became creative in protecting their children against heresy. The education of children in the Catholic Church became of paramount importance. The Council of Trent advised that “the children in every parish be carefully taught the rudiments of the faith, and obedience towards God and their parents,” and that it was the duty of the parents to ensure such an education. For English Catholics, the solution to penal restrictions on Catholic education was to either tutor children clandestinely or set up schools in exile, taking on a transcontinental identity of English Catholicism. The first continental institutions were schools for boys and young men at Douai and St. Omer in France, founded in 1568 and 1592 respectively. An education at Douai, for example, focused on inciting indignation over the religious condition of

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788 A single woman hosting or hiding a single man within the private confines of her house naturally stimulated talk of sexual licentiousness between priests and single women. For example, a Mrs. Jane Leake was considered the concubine of one “Jerrard” [John Gerard]. *Jo. Byrde to Sir Robert Cecil*, Aug. 27, 1601, at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, Vol. 11: 1601 [872], 362.

England and created missionaries to combat heresy. The *Douay Diaries* states that their students were “intended for the English harvest”. It continues:

> We make it our first and foremost study, both in the seminary and in England by means of our labourers, to stir up, so far as God permits, in the minds of Catholics, especially of those who are preparing here for the Lord’s work, a zealous and just indignation against heretics. This we do by setting before the eyes of the students the exceeding majesty of the ceremonial of the catholic church in the place where we live, the great dignity of the holy sacrifice and sacrament, and the devotion and diligence with which the people come to church, confess their sins and hear sermons: while at the same time we picture to them the mournful contrast visible at home, the utter desolation of all things sacred which there exists, our country once so famed for its religion and holy before God now void of all religion, our friends and kinsfolk, all our dear ones and countless souls besides perishing in schism and godlessness.\(^{790}\)

Catholics who sent their sons abroad to Douai or St. Omer could expect an education that placed their sons in a safe environment for Catholics and trained them to affect change at home. By the 1590s, girls were also joining English convents and convent schools in exile, such as St. Ursula’s at Louvain.\(^{791}\) For the English women who went to convents on the continent, they joined an international Catholic community bound to Rome and guided by the Council of Trent. Caroline Bowden found that the creation of a convent community in exile led to 22 enclosed convents with more than 1950 members in Flanders and France by the end of the seventeenth century.\(^{792}\)

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\(^{790}\) *Knox, Douay Diaries*, xxxviii. The curriculum for such a mission could include Bible reading – Old Testament 12 times over the three years and the New Testament 16 times. A study of Greek and Hebrew. Two lectures on Summa of St. Thomas (scholastic theology). Instruction on catechism and pastoral matters, also taught of ecclesiastical penalties and censures. Manual of Navarrus twice a week for an hour. The Council of Trent, *Church history* by Bede (show history of Church in England), books of St. Augustine against heretics, to teach about “chief impieties, blasphemies, absurdities, cheats and trickeries of the English heretics, as well as with their ridiculous writings, sayings and doings.” *First and Second Douay Diaries*, xliii.


\(^{792}\) Bowden, “Community Space and Cultural Transmission,” 366.
Such convents provided a general education and argued for the importance of religious zeal to a
group of women outcast from their homeland because of their faith.\footnote{For an analysis of convent education, see Caroline Bowden, “For the Glory of God’: a Study of the Education of English Catholic Women in Convents in Flanders and France in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century,” \textit{Paedagogica Historica} 35, 1 (1999): 77-95.}

A number of Catholic families used these English exile communities. From the \textit{Responsa Scholarum} of the English College of Rome, a general picture takes shape regarding education, conversion, the role of the family and women in particular within England, albeit from a limited group of Catholic men. The \textit{Responsa} was published and translated from Latin by the Catholic Record Society and includes 600 responses written and recorded by individuals who left England for seminary at the English College of Rome from 1598 to 1685.\footnote{\textit{The English College at Rome, Responsa Part 1, 1598-1621}, Vol. 54 (London: Catholic Record Society,1906), vii.} The detail of this source allows for quantitative analysis of the education received by Catholics while in England, the various reasons for going abroad, influences for conversion, and it illuminates the role of the family in religious life and education in England. Each student answered six questions upon arrival regarding their education, health, conversion, parents, whether they suffered for the faith in England, and their desires for an ecclesiastic life. Many individuals were educated at home by private tutors, or were educated under the guardianship of a relative. Seven respondents were brought up or educated by a female family member (four grandmothers, three mothers – all widows).\footnote{\textit{Responsa}, 11, 95, 178, 181, 198, 200, 222.} Robert Forster, for instance, who arrived in Rome in 1606, wrote that he “returned to his birthplace until 13, learning only what letters his mother knew, helped rarely by a priest.”\footnote{\textit{Responsa}, Response 445, 178.} Others attended public schools, while some attended university. Some record having been educated at Jesuit institutions such as St. Omers and Douai before arriving in Rome.\footnote{\textit{Responsa}, xi.} Overall,
in terms of education, the responses reveal varied experiences of education dependent on the financial status and religious inclinations of parents and guardians.

A similar story of variance exists within the responses regarding the students’ conversion to Catholicism. A number of students answered that friends had encouraged their conversion, while others accredited it to the work of priests. These priests generally resided within the homes of family and friends within their personal or familial network. Many students responded that they were drawn to Catholicism through readings. The most frequently referenced book was Father Robert Persons’ *Christian Directory* (1582). Others included Laurence Vaux’s *A Catechism or Christian Doctrine* (1583), Persons’ *Defence of the Censure* (1582), and Edmund Campion’s *Decem Rationes* (c. 1580/81). For instance, Francis Walsingham wrote in 1606 that he “was converted from heresy by reading Fr. Persons’ *Defence of the Censure* which was lent to him by a schismatic whom he was trying to pervert.” From these responses, it can be concluded that contemporary Englishmen wrote effective readings that promoted the conversion of their compatriots, two of which being written by Jesuit priests, and one by a Canons Regular. English missionary priests and their writings feature as the most influential sources of conversion, suggesting that the English Catholic mission was exactly that – an “English” Catholic mission.

Of the 237 responses within the chronological scope of this study (1580-1630), 116 were from individuals under the age of 21, who were therefore sent abroad as a minor. Of those 116, eight were specifically stated to have been sent abroad (either to Rome or originally to St. Omers) by their mothers. George Morgan, a 19-year-old from Monmouthshire was sent to Douai

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798 *Responsa*, xi.
“at his mother’s instigation.” John Simons wrote in 1611 that he “was sent to St. Omers by his mother who feared that he would fall into heresy.” Edward Harris wrote that he was “allowed by his father, at his mother’s entreaty, to go to St. Omers.” Of these eight mothers, four were known widows. While the numbers represented here are small, this evidence does support the prevailing historiography that some women were leaders within the Catholic families of England. Hugh Aveling has postulated that 2/3 of the Catholic households in England could be considered matriarchal. Additionally, John Bossy concluded in *The English Catholic Community*, “All in all, I think the evidence entitles us to conclude that, to a considerable degree, the Catholic community owed its existence to gentelwomen’s dissatisfaction at the Reformation settlement of religion, and that they played an abnormally important part in its early history.” Within the responses, 30 students commented on the strong Catholicism of their mother, oftentimes in comparison with their fathers. A number stated that their mothers were Catholic while their fathers were schismatic. Others accredited their conversion to their mothers. At 16, Ralph Greene was “attracted to Catholicism by the devoutness of his mother and sister.” John Smith wrote that he was “drawn to Catholicism probably by his mother’s life and teaching.” Others converted through their mothers’ efforts, and even their tears. Altogether, the responses show a strong female presence within many English Catholic families, a presence that converted, catechized, and played an important role in sending children abroad. Yet variance dependent on

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800 *Responsa*, Response 409, 142.
802 *Responsa*, Response 611, 336.
803 When considering the fact that widows made up less than nine percent of the female population at a given time, this small number is not surprising. Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 108.
804 Aveling, “Catholic Households of Yorkshire”, 88
806 *Responsa*, Response 451, 186.
807 *Responsa*, Response 363, 77.
808 *Responsa*, Response 377, 108 for a conversion through mother’s tears.

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social standing, financial security, and family connections accounts for the diversity in responses. These factors, together with the assumption that these students either willingly or inadvertently left information out of their brief responses, thwart the creation of a holistic argument regarding education or family lives. However, they do reveal a presence of widows within the process of Catholic education. The rest of this chapter will examine how widowhood influenced this role as protector and religious guardian.

_Widowhood and the Catholic Education of Children_

Some widows utilized their vulnerability under the law and their newfound autonomy after the death of their husbands to send children abroad for Catholic education or an ecclesiastic vocation. This strategy was part of an overall attempt to ensure the continuance of Catholicism in England, both by continuing the faith in the next generation and supplying seminaries with able bodies to become the next missionary priests; suggesting an English Catholic community with permeable national boundaries and an adaptive strategy of survival. By examining travel narratives from the late seventeenth century, Liesbeth Corens has argued that such international communities considered themselves to have a clear connection with England, despite their location in a foreign country, and they strove to maintain an English identity.\(^{809}\) As pockets of English Catholicism, these seminaries, schools, and convents educated and provided a home to displaced English Catholics, while providing priests who returned to their homeland to further the Catholic cause. The parental autonomy granted to widows created a unique agency in this process of “confessional mobility.”\(^{810}\) The purpose of this section is not to show that Catholic widows sent children abroad more frequently, that all widows sent their children abroad, or that

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it was a practice used only by widows. Instead, this analysis will show how widowhood affected a parent’s ability to educate their child in the faith. Ironically, the social structure that precipitated Catholic widows’ unique position to influence their children’s education was entrenched in their legal vulnerability in the Court of Wards. The Court of Wards was an explicit legal mechanism of patriarchal control – a structure that throws into sharper relief the obstructions Catholic widows encountered that Catholic wives did not. The following section examines the lives of six widows who manipulated this legal obstruction and sent children to convents and seminaries on the continent. By examining six women individually, three possibilities occur. First, we get a deeper understanding of how widowhood influenced a mother’s ability to protect and guide her children on an individual level. Second, such an analysis allows for a variety of experiences based on social standing, age, and economic security, and shies away from homogenizing the post-Reformation Catholic experience. Third, we gain an understanding of how not only gender, but also marital status, created both limitations and opportunities for Catholics to sustain their faith.

The first widow under analysis is Dorothy Lawson (1580-1632), born Dorothy Constable into a Catholic family in 1580 in the midst of the anti-Catholic legislation enacted by Elizabeth and her advisors. On March 10, 1597, Dorothy Constable married the lawyer Roger Lawson, esquire, the Protestant son and heir to Ralph Lawson of Brough Hall. His estate was worth 3000 pounds a year, thereby ensuring Dorothy Lawson with a comfortable life in the north of England. Her seventeen-year marriage to Roger Lawson ended with his death in 1614 due to

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sickness. Left with a reported fifteen children and her house at Heaton, Lawson became a widow with inherited property.\footnote{812}{The number of children varies in sources, sometimes listing anywhere between twelve and nineteen. Fifteen is the most agreed upon. See Hanlon, “These be but women”, 378.}

Upon her widowhood, Lawson assumed full control of her own household for the first time. She was free to make decisions without fear that they would negatively influence her husband, his career, or his property.\footnote{813}{Roland Connelly, \textit{Women of the Catholic Resistance: In England 1540-1680} (Edinburgh: The Pentland Press Limited, 1997), 186.} According to her biographer, Roger Lawson was a Protestant although he converted on his deathbed through the efforts of his wife.\footnote{814}{Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 22.} His Protestantism and career as a lawyer in the public eye no doubt hindered Dorothy’s ability to place her children where she wished. Palmes writes, “She was no sooner settled at home, \textit{and att her own disposall}, but had one of the Society, Legard, in her house, by whose continuall advice and assistance, she daily improv’d, not only in her own perfection, but became visibly more active towards her children and neighbours.”\footnote{815}{Italics added for emphasis. Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 24. The identity of this Father Legard is still unknown, although Jesuit priests frequently assumed a pseudonym.}

This passage, while admittedly hagiographic, divulges three opportunities presented in her new position as a widow. First, Lawson was now independent to make choices about her household and children without the input of a male authority figure. While wives did maintain a semblance of authority within the household, a widow had more complete control. Second, following the death of her husband, her attentions were turned more towards her children and neighbors. Unencumbered by marital duties, Lawson was free to act as she desired, and her desire was to further the Catholic cause – be that sending children abroad, building a house for the use of Jesuit priests, or devoting her time to catechizing the surrounding community. Each of these actions she undertook only after the death of her
husband. Widowhood provided both the independence and the opportunity to act. Third, this passage shows the influence of a Jesuit priest, one Father Legard, within her house. Lawson, like many Catholic widows, replaced the authority of her husband with the spiritual direction and guidance of a Jesuit father.\textsuperscript{816} The biography states that Lawson, “prosecuted all religious institutes with love and reverence, but was peculiarly devoted to the Society of Jesus, and so overjoy’d at the receipt of this favour, that, for a perpetuall acknowledgement, shee desir’d her eldest son to whome St. Antony’s fell after her decease, that it might be as freely att their service as it was in her life.”\textsuperscript{817} Father Legard’s prompt presence in her house at her widowhood could be interpreted to support the existence of a Jesuit strategy of bringing widows into the fold to use their money, houses, and offspring for the Catholic mission, as propagated by the anti-Jesuit pamphlet \textit{The Jesuits Intrigues}.

With this newfound autonomy, opportunity, and guidance, Lawson is purported to have placed nine children in seminaries and convents abroad. Like many Catholic mothers, she took charge of bringing up her children as Catholics from an early age. Palmes writes, “These children, through her sedulous industry, were all bred Catholicks, solidly instructed in Christian doctrine, or principles of faith, and had the company of a priest so freely, her husband going more frequently than at first to London about law business.”\textsuperscript{818} With the persistent absence of a Protestant husband, Lawson created a Catholic family like many Catholic wives of England.\textsuperscript{819} Yet the death of her husband extended this control over her children from mere education to vocational placement – a strategy specific to the authority provided her by widowhood.

\textsuperscript{817} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 51-52.
\textsuperscript{818} Palmes, \textit{Life of Dorothy Lawson}, 20.
\textsuperscript{819} While Lawson’s biographer maintains that her husband was a Protestant until his deathbed conversion, a number of Catholic women were married to Papist husbands who shared their religious convictions.
She addressed all the rest of her children, a dozen in number (except the heire, in whom she deservedly planted the hope of perpetuating that antient stock, and two daughters, one by sickness, the other impeded by immaturity of age), each to colleges and religious houses, appointed for men and women, with sufficient maintenance, according to their several vocations. Nor will it either seem incredible or not meriting belief, that she bestow’d them on God with that facility, if we seriously ponder the exemplar devotion shee constantly used in bringing them into the world; for whereas mothers att that time, according to the byas of nature, are most sensible and fond of infants, shee, eyeing more their spiritual good than her sensuall content, bequeath’d every one to a particular saint, to protect, as patron, from all mishap of infortune, and tender as a sacrifice to his majesty in her name.820

As a woman whose life cycle had passed her years of reproduction – with her husband dead and having vowed to remain a widow – Lawson’s legacy through her children was devoted to the perpetuation and survival of Catholicism in her family. Palmes writes that Lawson gave “her children as freely to God as he gave them to her, counseling them to take religious courses if they had callings; if not, to make choice of houses for their abode, where those of the Society resided.”821 By placing them in religious houses abroad or encouraging them to maintain households that welcomed priests, Lawson’s hope of the future, not unlike many mothers, was firmly placed in the movements and actions of her children. Three of Lawson’s daughters can be traced to convents in Louvain and Ghent and each were sent after the death of Roger Lawson. Daughter Dorothy Lawson joined the Augustinians in Louvain as a choir nun in 1618 at the age of 18. Margaret Lawson and Mary Lawson joined the Benedictines in Ghent in 1626 and 1631, respectively.822 It appears that a son, Ralph, died at school in Douai. Other children married into Catholic families, although their education and placement before marriage is unknown.823

820 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 24-25.
821 Palmes, Life of Dorothy Lawson, 55.
Lawson’s placement of her children in Louvain, Ghent, and Douai was an action that directly connected her family with an international Catholic expatriate community.

Such English convents and seminaries on the continent were not merely secluded havens for English men and women seeking freedom from penal laws at home. These communities engaged in an international Catholicism through patronage and integration into local communities. Seminaries and schools such as St. Omers, Douai, and Valladolid relied on the cooperation and active involvement of local rulers and citizens. For example, King Philip of Spain was a patron of St. Omers beginning in 1593, with an annual pension of 10,000 crowns.824 Douai gained its first college (Anchin College) in 1569 from an endowment from the French abbot of a neighboring monastery.825 Continental convents for English women in exile were dogmatically connected to Rome, as these institutions followed Council of Trent requirements for the design and placement of the enclosures, along with its guidelines for written constitutions.826 Donations for building materials and furnishings of convents came from both English and continental benefactors, and convent chapels were visited by local laity. Caroline Bowden has argued that convents were “cultural entrepôts” that “acted as an interface between locals and English culture.”827 Whether seminaries, schools, or convents, English Catholic exile communities both participated in and benefited from a community of international Catholics. Lawson’s participation in such a community through her children reveals that widowhood had a profound impact on a woman’s ability to extend her religious influence across the Channel and participate in a religious community hitherto cut off from her.

(baptized 1605), Margaret (fl. 1607–1650), John (baptized 1608), Mary (fl. 1609–1672), Roger, Thomas, Edmund (d. 1642/3), James, Catherine (d. 1637), Anne, and Elizabeth.

825 Knox, Douay Diaries, 28.
826 Bowden, “Community Space and Cultural Transmission,” 365.
827 Bowden, “Patronage and Practice,” 494, 489.
With strict penal laws in place, Lawson’s ability to send so many children abroad suggests that the enforcement of laws was either sporadic or ineffective.\textsuperscript{828} This success, coupled with her significant absence from recusant rolls suggests that Lawson somehow avoided persecution in Newcastle.\textsuperscript{829} A variety of factors potentially contributed to this evasion from penal punishment. Newcastle’s distance from London and its setting in the north of England may have resulted in a lighter enforcement of penal laws against Catholics, as discussed in chapter four. Local officials may have had Catholic sympathies or recusant family members, or Lawson’s powerful relatives may have aided in her immunity.\textsuperscript{830} A pamphlet, printed in 1883 to celebrate the completion of a new Catholic school chapel situated on Dorothy Lawson’s property commemorated the life of Dorothy Lawson and discussed Lawson’s invisibility from authorities. The pamphlet states, “Mrs. Lawson must have been regarded by all classes – that no interference was ever attempted with her and the exercise of religion – and what a glorious testimony to the men of Tyneside, who so nobly refused to trample upon the rights of conscience!”\textsuperscript{831}

\textsuperscript{828} Sara Warneke, \textit{Images of the Educational Traveller in Early Modern England} (London: Brill, 1995), 160-90 discusses how English authorities were continually dismayed by the large numbers of Englishmen who made their way to seminaries and colleges on the continent, 163.

\textsuperscript{829} While the consensus is that Lawson was never listed as a recusant, sources suggest that it may not have been a complete subversion from the law. Some of her children are present in a list of popish recusants from October 1626 in the county of Durham. Listed are Ralph Lawson, Anne Lawson, and Marie Lawson. Durham University Library, MSP 2/412: 16 Oct., 1626. Also, see a transcription of this document in Northumberland Archives, NRO 1954/70. Furthermore, in the North Yorkshire Record Office is a bond to the crown from Henry Lawson, son of Dorothy, paying £45 for recusancy. £20 was sent as two third parts of lands that belonged to Dorothy for recusancy, although she had since died, ZRL 9/3/2. In addition, there are gaps in the Quarter Session Records in Newcastle for the time Lawson lived, so perhaps she was recognized as a Catholic by authorities, but the evidence does not survive. Quarter Session Records for Newcastle are housed at the Tyne and Ware Archives in Newcastle. A special thanks to the archivists at Tyne and Ware for helping me search for Dorothy Lawson in the archive.


Catholick ceremonies”.

While the overtly Catholic nature of her funeral is uncorroborated in other sources, the exact date and place of her burial, as described by Palmes, matches the burial register for Newcastle. The reasons for her success in harboring priests, converting the community, sending children overseas, and having an overtly Catholic funeral can be accredited to the independence provided by widowhood, and her status in the community. An examination of other widows who sent children abroad shows that widowhood had a profound impact on a woman’s ability to take charge of her family.

As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland (née Tanfield) (1585-1639) went to extremes to place her children abroad following the death of her husband. We know of her exploits from the survival of a biography, presumed to be written around 1650 by one of Lady Falkland’s daughters. First publication came in 1857 from a manuscript from Lille that formerly belonged to the English Benedictine Nuns of Cambray. According to the biography, Lady Falkland’s husband, Sir Henry Cary (c.1575-1633), was a staunch Protestant known for persecuting Catholics in Ireland. Due to Lady Falkland’s religious predilections (she publicly converted to Catholicism in 1625), her husband demanded a separation *mensa et thoro*, refused to give her financial support, and placed her children out of reach, many of whom lived with their eldest son Lucius Cary. Together, they had eleven

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833 Mrs. Dorotie Lawson wife to Roger Lawson...buried, March 1631/2, at Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn, EP 09-02, p. 63.  
children. Henry Cary died from gangrene following a broken leg and subsequent amputation in September of 1633.\textsuperscript{836}

Henry Cary’s death set in motion a plan, enacted by Lady Falkland, to take complete control over her children.\textsuperscript{837} As quoted at the beginning of the chapter, her biographer wrote that upon the death of her husband, “Seeing him dead, though she wept (for she truly loved him much) she was very present with herself…and her first thoughts were to get her children to live with her (which she desired, in order to their being Catholics).”\textsuperscript{838} The immediacy of this action shows that within the first few hours of widowhood, Cary had an opportunity that had previously been unavailable to her. On the evening of her husband’s death, she traveled to the house where her daughters lived and convinced them to live with her.\textsuperscript{839} The biography continues, “She then only sought to have her children with her, where they might have more occasion to come to the knowledge of the truth, and better means to follow it.”\textsuperscript{840} According to her biographer, Lady Falkland strove, like many Catholic mothers in post-Reformation England, to emulate her faith to her children and convert them to Catholicism. Yet despite her efforts, the biographer laments that her Protestant children chided her for her Catholicism and would “reproach her with her religion.” In return, Cary, “with tears in her eyes, ask[ed] pardon for the scandal she had given them.”\textsuperscript{841} Eventually, “In virtue of which she had supported all with an incredible patience and constancy for more than three quarters of a year without the least sign of hope…she saw them all

\textsuperscript{836} Simpson, \textit{The Lady Falkland}, 47.
\textsuperscript{837} See Elizabeth Ann Mackay, “Shrew(d) Maternities, Elizabeth Cary’s \textit{Life}, and Filial Equivocations,” \textit{Tulsa Studies Women’s Literature} 33, 2 (2014): 23-50 for a perspective of Cary that depicts her as alienating and unconventional in her maternal practices.
\textsuperscript{838} Simpson, \textit{The Lady Falkland}, 50.
\textsuperscript{839} Simpson, \textit{The Lady Falkland}, 50.
\textsuperscript{840} Simpson, \textit{The Lady Falkland}, 52.
\textsuperscript{841} Simpson, \textit{The Lady Falkland}, 58.
resolved to be Catholics.”

The conversion of her daughters must have been made public, as shortly after, Lord Newburgh requested that King Charles I remove the children from her care. In response, the king sent Secretary Coke with a message to Lady Falkland to “forbear working upon her daughters’ consciences and suffer them to go to my Lord their brother, or any other safe place where they might receive such instruction as was fit for them.”

Lady Falkland’s resolve to sustain Catholicism within her family did not stop at her children’s conversion. She sent four daughters and two sons abroad to convents and seminaries. Evidence for this exists outside of the hagiographic biography of Lady Falkland. Within the Privy Council Register of Charles I is a memo from the Star Chamber, dated 1636, stating that the Lady Falkland sent “over into foreign parts two of her sons without license to be educated there (as is conceived) in the Romish religion.” Prevailing historiography states that she kidnapped her sons so that they might be sent abroad. The four daughters went to the Benedictine convent at Cambrai in France. Sisters Mary Cary, Elizabeth Cary, and Lucy Cary all arrived in August of 1638, while Anne Cary arrived in 1639. Anne would eventually assist in the reformation of St. Lazar, another French convent in Cambrai. She completed a guide to devotion for the convent in French, and helped in the foundation of an English exile convent in Paris. Anne’s actions show that an English woman could have a profound impact on her local community through her writings and involvement with local convents. They also reveal the subtle and intricate ways expatriate communities interacted and participated in a wider network.

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843 As quoted in Simpson, The Lady Falkland, 178-179. For the original, see Archbishop Laud to the King, State Paper Office, Domestic, Charles I. July 1634.
844 As quoted within Simpson, The Lady Falkland, 182. These two sons were Patrick and Henry. For the original, see Privy Council Register of Charles I, vol xii, p. 194.
845 Mackay, “Shrew(d) Maternities,” 35; Simpson, The Lady Falkland, 80, states that she was to “steal them away.”
Lady Falkland’s life exemplifies the independence of thought and action inherent in widowhood, despite the tightening grasp of the Court of Wards.

As another example of this sense of urgency inspired by the Court of Wards, consider Rebecca Salvin (née Collingwood) who married Thomas Salvin in 1597, had six children (one did not survive), and persistently remained on the lists of recusants for the parish of Norton. 848 Rebecca’s presence in the recusant rolls in contrast to Thomas’ absence has left Anne Forster to argue that Thomas was a conformist. 849 Thomas’ death in 1609 left Rebecca with five young children, ranging in age from twelve to three months. Rebecca “remained at Thornton Hall and proceeded, despite the difficulties of the times, to bring up her children in her own faith, taking her eldest boy away from a Protestant school and sending him to a seminary abroad.” 850 Thomas’ position as an outward conformist left Rebecca in a precarious position in her efforts to bring up her children as Catholic. The separation between Rebecca and her husband in terms of religion is most clearly stated in his will. He writes, “For that my said wife is not capable of dower thirds or jointure, being not obedient to the laws, yet my heartie desire…is during the minority of my said sonne she be found within all things necessarie for her.” 851 Rebecca Salvin is an example of a widow who following the death of her husband, began to bring her children up in the faith due to her newfound freedom of conscience, and immediately sent her son abroad. The immediacy could be in response to the Court of Wards, as her son would have been placed under Protestant care due to Salvin’s recusancy and his age. Upon becoming a widow, Salvin took control of her family, avoided feudal wardship laws, and sent her eldest abroad to seminary.

850 Forster, “Portrait of a Recusant Lady,” 5.
851 Forster, “Portrait of a Recusant Lady,” 5.
As a further example, Jane Wiseman [née Vaughan] (d. 1610) was left with eight children following the death of her husband Thomas Wiseman in 1585. Following his death, she went to live with her son William at Braddocks, where she met John Gerard. The Jesuit convinced her to create her own household for Jesuit use and was influential in convincing Wiseman to bestow two of her sons to the Society of Jesus in 1592. Wiseman herself features prominently within numerous examinations and letters that documented recusants in Essex. Her activity as an independent and powerful widow is best described in a list of recusant servants found at Braddocks in 1594. It states, “Mrs. Jane Wiseman, Wm. Wiseman’s mother, has also been a great harbourer of priests and other bad persons, and went to Wisbeach with her daughters, where she was absolved and blessed by Father Edmonds, the Jesuit, since which her daughters have been sent beyond the seas, to be professed as nuns, as her other two daughters were before.” Anne and Barbara Wiseman joined the Bridgettines in Rouen, with one eventually becoming Abbess at Lisbon, while Bridget and Jane joined the Augustinians at St. Ursula’s in Louvain. With the help of John Gerard, Jane Wiseman (the daughter) founded an English convent of the Order Saint Monica’s in Louvain and governed it for twenty-four years. In total, Wiseman sent all of her daughters and two sons to the continent, thereby bestowing six of her eight children to overseas communities, in some part due to the frequent advice received from Jesuits John Gerard and Father Edmonds. Jane Wiseman and John Gerard’s relationship exemplifies the influence of Jesuit priests on the lives of widows. It is tenuous to conjecture if

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853 *List by Rich. Young of seven recusant servants found in Mr. Wiseman’s house*, 1594, at the National Archives, London, SP 12/248 f.160.
this relationship was one of reliance (an exchange of one form of male authority for another), or
one of spiritual guidance, sustained for holistic devotion and celibacy in their widowhood. 856
What can be concluded, however, is that Wiseman is yet another example of the connection
between widows and Jesuits within the English Catholic mission, particularly when it came to
sending children to overseas religious communities.

Eleanor Brooksby (née Vaux) (c.1560-1625) was the daughter of fierce Catholic William
Vaux, third Baron Vaux of Harrowden. Brooksby was educated as a child under Edmund
Campion and grew to support Jesuit priests as her father had done, especially in her widowhood.
Brooksby married Edward Brooksby in 1577 and had two children, William (d. 1606) and Mary
(c. 1579-1628). 857 Edward died just four years into their marriage. Following his death, Eleanor
adopted a five-year-old first cousin, Frances Burroughs, thereby becoming a new widow with
three young children. While Brooksby arranged Catholic marriages for her two children, she sent
Frances abroad in 1597 to St. Ursula’s Convent in Louvain to join the Augustinian order. 858
Eleanor’s choice to fashion Catholic marriages for her two children instead of send them abroad
reveals a separate strategy of Catholic survival. Instead of destining her children to religious
vocations, they married into Catholic families to preserve the faith within England. 859

Orchestrating the marriage of children into Catholic families is yet another tactic,
undertaken by Catholics, to perpetuate Catholic survival within the family. Much like Eleanor

856 See Arthur Marotti, “Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits and Ideological
Fantasies,” in Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts, ed. Arthur Marotti (London:
Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), 1-34.
858 Colleen M. Seguin, “Brooksby, Eleanor (c.1560–1625),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford:
April 2014.
859 Transcripts by Fr. W. Vincent Smith, 1959, at Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn, NRO 1954/63, p.124, with
unnumbered papers, M. 1014.
Brooksby, Anne Salvin (née Blakiston) (d. 1624) both sent a child abroad and negotiated the marriages of her daughters to recusant families.\textsuperscript{860} Anne Salvin was widowed in 1602/3 with at least six children following the death of her husband, Gerard Salvin.\textsuperscript{861} She was a notorious recusant with at least eight known convictions spanning August 1605 to the year of her death, 1624.\textsuperscript{862} It appears that either her recusant activities began following the death of her husband, or she was not found liable for them until after he died. Not only was she active in the Catholic community herself, but she raised all six children to be Catholic and helped place them accordingly. Her second son, Ralph, entered the English College at Rome in October 1620 after studying for five years at St. Omers.\textsuperscript{863} Ralph writes that the youngest son, Francis, was “Catholically and politely brought up in the house of my mother called Butterwick.”\textsuperscript{864} Salvin’s eldest son, William, may have fallen victim to the feudal wardship laws, according to a surviving legal opinion written by a Richard Godfrey stating that the Bishop of Durham claimed wardship of him.\textsuperscript{865} However, William appears to have been dead by 1620 and was convicted of recusancy with his mother in April 1615. That same year, he married into a Catholic family, according to his brother, Ralph.\textsuperscript{866} If his guardianship was passed to the Bishop of Durham, any hope of converting him to Protestantism seems to have failed. The three remaining children, all daughters, were married into known recusant families. The youngest, Elizabeth, had a run in with

\textsuperscript{860} Anne Salvin was married to Gerard Salvin, the son of Gerard Salvin, who was the brother-in-law of Rebecca Salvin. Thus, Rebecca Salvin was Anne’s aunt, through marriage.
\textsuperscript{861} It is supposed that Salvin was not converted until the year of his death. \textit{Notes on Salvins of Croxdale and Thornton Hall, 55pp. with index}, at Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn, NRO 1954/64: Transcripts pp. 126-214, M. 1014.
\textsuperscript{862} \textit{Notes on Salvins of Croxdale and Thornton Hall, 55pp. with index}, at Northumberland Archives, Woodhorn, NRO 1954/64: Transcripts pp. 126-214, M. 1014. For the documents relating to Anne Salvin’s recusancy, see Durham County Record Office, D-Sa-F 163-169.
\textsuperscript{863} \textit{Responsa}, Response 608, 333.
\textsuperscript{864} As quoted in NRO 1954/64: Transcripts pp. 126-214; notes on Salvins of Croxdale and Thornton Hall, 55pp. with index, M. 1014.
\textsuperscript{865} Durham County Record Office, D/Sa/F 412, n.d.
\textsuperscript{866} \textit{Responsa}, Response 608, 333.
authorities when she refused the Oath of Abjuration as a widow. The Long Parliament passed the Oath of Abjuration in 1655, which required every landowning Catholic over the age of 21 to subscribe to the oath, which denied vital Catholic beliefs. Those who refused had two-thirds of their estate sequestered and repossessed by non-Catholics. The life of Anne Salvin shows that for a woman married to a conformist, the greatest opportunity for distributing children for the Catholic cause came through independence provided by widowhood.

Together, the examples of these women show that individual widows had vastly different experiences under the Court of Wards, depending on whether or not they circumvented the law by acting quickly and sending children across the Channel. While Agnes Throckmorton suffered a loss of maternal authority, Elizabeth Cary, Rebecca Salvin and others adapted under such legal pressures. What was a patriarchal structure of control was used by Cary and Salvin as propulsion for agency. In addition, the experience of the above widows reveals that social status and economic stability had an important impact on their ability to send children abroad; yet, these factors were a part of every Catholic’s experience in England. What set these women apart was the independence and opportunity that accompanied widowhood. From this analysis, five themes emerge as particular to the experience of a widow who desired to sustain Catholicism through her children, separate from that of a wife or other Catholic. First, due to guardianship laws and the active Court of Wards, widowhood oftentimes required immediate and deliberate action on the part of the widow. While a limitation to widowhood, the immediacy that accompanied feudal wardship led to an opportunity for women like Elizabeth Cary to act on their religion. Second, Catholic mothers were expected to raise children in the faith. Jan Broadway argues, “Catholic

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mothers are frequently credited with ensuring that their children were raised in the old faith, even when their fathers compromised with Protestant authorities and attended the parish church." As Broadway shows, previous historiography has focused on the role of the wife in religiously unequal marriages. However, as shown by these examples, a widow could raise her children up in Catholicism without worrying about the religion of her husband.

Third, widowhood provided independence in actions. Widows could maintain a Catholic household and send children where they wanted, all without being under the control or watchful eye of a male figure. They was free to act on their own accord. Fourth, widows had the freedom to turn both their thoughts and actions towards God. They could dedicate their lives to the faith more holistically than they could in marriage. As even the apostle Paul said, “The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” Finally, the fifth theme is that there was a clear link between widows and Jesuit priests that, while present with Catholic wives, is more prominent in the lives of widows. The Jesuits’ role as ghostly fathers to these women without male guidance made widows a prime strategy for the Catholic mission, as seen from both Protestant propaganda and the actions of Jesuits.

Each of these points shows not only a gendered strategy for the Catholic mission, but one that was dependent on marital status. Widowhood provided freedom of conscience and autonomy in actions that was unavailable to the married Catholic woman. The limitations provided by widowhood, such as children falling under feudal wardship laws, provided impetus to act. The commonplace relationship with Jesuits provided new opportunities for widows who

\[870\] 1 Corinthians 7:34.
desired a religious life. While widowhood came with certain disadvantages, these were frequently used as advantages in the process of Catholic survival— in this instance, for the sustaining of Catholicism in future generations by promoting Catholic education abroad.

Alternate Efforts to Sustain Catholicism: Printing Presses and Patronage

While the majority of this section has focused on widows who sent their children to Catholic institutions after the death of their husband, there were two additional actions pursued by widows and other Catholics alike, which attempted to sustain Catholicism in England on a scale that defied national boundaries. First, the creation and maintenance of a clandestine printing press within England facilitated the survival and production of Catholic works both at home and abroad. The example of Lady Cecily Stonor best depicts the role of widows in maintaining a Catholic press. Second, the act of patronage, both within England and institutions on the continent, was a tangible way for Catholics to support the continuance of their faith on an international scale. In both cases, widowhood provided unique opportunities for these international efforts.

Father Robert Persons and Father Edmund Campion, two of the earliest Jesuits of the English mission, established the private printing press at Stonor Park in 1581. The house belonged to the widow Dame Cecily Stonor (née Chamberlayne) (c.1520-1592), who was

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871 Widows not only followed the guidance of Jesuits towards priest harboring and sending children abroad, a number of widows took the step to abandon England and enter convents abroad themselves. According to the Who Were the Nuns? online database, 55 Catholic widows left England and entered English convents in exile between 1598 and 1800. I am grateful to Jan Broadway and Caroline Bowden who supplied me with a list of widows from the database, July 2013. Of course, the decision of a widow to go abroad to join a cloister came with its own social scrutiny. When Lady Lovell went to Brussels to join the English Benedictine convent, her contemporaries criticized her plan to join the cloister in 1608 because of the ‘great neglect’ that she would demonstrate in ‘abandoning the care of her children’. Peter Guilday, The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent 1558-1795 (London: Longmans, 1914), 360. Furthermore, Macek argues that the members of the Society of Jesus were “practitioners of an Ignatian spirituality that provided a new perspective and rationale for women who were married or who lacked easy access to the cloistered life of women religious.” Macek, “Ghostly Fathers”, 221.

married to Sir Francis Stonor, until his death in 1570. Together, they had four children. She was a known recusant, as shown by the response she gave to the Justices of the Peace when called for her recusancy:

I was born in such a time when Holy Mass was in great reverence, and was brought up in the same faith. In King Edward’s time this reverence was neglected and reproved by such as governed. In Queen Mary’s it was restored with much applause, and now in this time it pleaseth the state to question them, as now they do me, who continue in this Catholic profession. The State would have the several changes, which I have seen with mine eyes, good and laudable...I hold me still to that wherein I was born and bred, and find nothing taught in it but great virtue and sanctity, and so by the grace of God I will live and die in it.

Her dedication to Catholicism together with the setting of the house made Stonor Park the ideal location for the printing press. The house was nestled in the woods, twenty miles from London, and was uninhabited since Dame Cecily was living in the dowager house instead of in the manor house. Stonor Park offered seclusion, privacy, and ample space – characteristics contingent on Dame Cecily Stonor’s resources as a widow. Here, Campion printed *Decem Rationes*, or “Ten Reasons”, to justify the Catholic faith and debated matters of belief with university members. The book was widely distributed with over 400 copies. Lady Stonor took great risk in keeping a press in her house, yet Roland Connelly argues that Dame Cecily, “knew what she was doing and she was fully aware of the risks she was taking in harbouring priests and permitting them to operate a printing press on her premises. Nevertheless, this elderly lady, already in her sixties,

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873 As quoted in Stonor, Stonor, 259-260. This quote is widely attributed to Lady Cecily Stonor, and is a response she gave to the Justices at Oxford in response to her charge of recusancy. While it is quoted in this family history; in Christopher Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,” in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 176; in H. Clifford, *Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria* (London: 1887), 38-9; and is even posted on the wall in Stonor Park to this day, the exact source for this quote is unknown. To my knowledge, it does not exist amidst the state papers in the National Archives.

874 Stonor, Stonor, 244.

did not hesitate to commit herself and her fortunes to what she recognized as a task of paramount importance.” In July 1581, Campion left Stonor and stayed at the house of yet another widow, Mrs. Yates, where he was arrested and subsequently tortured in the Tower. His torture led to the search and seizure of Stonor. Evidence for this search and seizure exists in a letter from the Privy Council to Sir Henry Nevill, written in August 1581, thanking him for the care and pains he took in the “apprehencion of the printers at Stonardes (sic) Lodge.” From the letter, it appears

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that he defaced the massing materials and packed up the press and any papers, books and writings left behind.\textsuperscript{878}

By the end of the search, thirty-two individuals were arrested for their association with the press. However, Dame Cecily Stonor evaded prison. A letter to Sir Henry Nevill states that Lady Stonor was instead committed to the custody of her eldest son, Francis Stonor, and placed under house arrest in August 1581.\textsuperscript{879} By December of the same year, Lady Stonor was permitted to return to her house, although she remained under house arrest.\textsuperscript{880} Despite the fact that she was known to be “receiving and harboring of certen lwede persones taken in her howse”, the Council was content to let her live in her own house “by reason of her age and sycknes.”\textsuperscript{881} In April 1582, the Privy Council granted her leave to take the waters at Bath for her health. While in Bath, Francis Stonor assumed responsibility of his mother and vowed to keep an eye on her, and “have regard that no personne known to be evell affected in Relligion shall for the tyme have acesse unto her to conferre with her.”\textsuperscript{882} For the next few years, Lady Stonor was free to move about as before. According to the priest Anthony Sherlock, Stonor continued maintaining priests in her home and hosting Catholic Mass. Sherlock’s confession to the Privy Council in 1606 reports that in 1586, “he grew in acquaintance with Lady Stonor near Henley-on-Thames and stayed with her three or four years, often saying Mass in her house.”\textsuperscript{883} Presumably for her continued recusancy and Catholic practices, Lady Stonor was imprisoned in 1592.\textsuperscript{884} The exact

\textsuperscript{878} [Meeting] 30 Augusti, 1581, at the National Archives, London, PC 2-13, f. 499.

\textsuperscript{879} [Meeting] Grenewich, 5 September, 1581, at the National Archives, London, PC 2-13, f. 505.

\textsuperscript{880} [Meeting] xxvij Novembris at Whitehall, 1581, at the National Archives, London, PC 2-13, f. 565.

\textsuperscript{881} [Meeting] xxvij Novembris at Whitehall, 1581, at the National Archives, London, PC 2-13, f. 565.

\textsuperscript{882} [Meeting] 25th Aprilis, Grenewiche, 1582, at the National Archives, London, PC 2/13 f.687.

\textsuperscript{883} As quoted in McGrath and Rowe, “The Elizabethan Priests: The Harbourers and Helpers,” 212. For the original, see the National Archives, SP 14-18, f.64.

date of her death and place of burial is unknown; however, it is assumed that she died in prison in 1592.  

It is surprising that Lady Stonor avoided severe punishment, considering that the clandestine press was housed under her roof and its discovery led to the execution of others. Robert Julian Stonor argues, “The unusual leniency with which she was treated at this stage was probably chiefly due to the conformity of her son, Francis, and his friendship with William Cecil.” It also appears that her age, health, gender, and status as a widow also contributed to her treatment by the authorities. While others were arrested and executed for their implication with the press, she was given over to the care and guardianship of her son. Due to her age and health, the council allowed her to return home and even granted her the freedom to travel to Bath. It was not until 1592 that authorities further recognized her as a threat to the community and imprisoned her. She was a sickly, aged woman without the protection of a husband, who relied on the care of her son. She was not taken seriously as a risk; therefore, she was not punished severely as a threat. In addition, the fact that this all took place just one year after the first Jesuits stepped foot on English shores may also suggest that authorities had not yet taken Catholic women, or widows for that matter, seriously. All this would change by the time Lady Magdalen Montague set up her Catholic household in East Sussex in the late 1590s. Her biographer wrote, “Yea, so far stretched the fortitude of this blessed woman in propagating the Catholic faith that she twice offered me leave to set up a press to print Catholic books in her

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885 In Ely and Banbury Castle, dated August 1592, so it can be supposed that she was housed elsewhere. Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 2008, f. 43.

885 Today Stonor Park is open to the public. In the attics of the house, they have set up the “St. Edmund Campion Room” where the printing press is assumed to have been. Placards adorn the walls telling the story of Edmund Campion, the press, the house search, and the role of Dame Cecily Stonor. A special thanks to Sue Gill, the bookshop tenant, who was kind enough to speak with me about Dame Cecily’s imprisonment and death.

886 Stonor, Stonor, 257.
house, which had been done but that it was most difficult and almost impossible in such an ample family to conceal such a matter from heretics. The contrast between Montague and Stonor not only lies in the size of the household and propensity for spies, but also in the remoteness of Stonor. Furthermore, perhaps there was a veil of incompetency and vulnerability, enjoyed by Lady Stonor, which was stripped from widows by the 1590s.

While Stonor’s efforts to provide a printing press ultimately failed, the time, space, and resources she had available to offer as a widow were essential for the production of Decem Rationes, a Catholic text that, as discussed in the Douay Diaries, drew English men to Catholicism and resulted in their move to seminaries like Douai. Works such as Campion’s Decem Rationes (c. 1580/81), Father Robert Person’s Christian Directory and Defence of the Censure (1582), and Laurence Vaux’s A Catechism or Christian Doctrine (1583) survived due to clandestine printing presses, like that at Stonor Park, and were essential to the organization and communication of the English Catholic community. Alexandra Walsham has argued that printing was a vital element of missionary activity – efforts that linked the exiled English community on the continent with Catholics in England. Devoid of official structures of the church, English Catholics relied on clandestine presses for communication, encouragement, and teaching between the continent and England. In the absence of priests or Mass, Catholic books and papers provided spiritual nourishment. Books were secretly brought in from the continent

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888 The legislative shift towards recognizing the role of women, including widows, in the underground Catholic community was discussed in chapter one. Although, it is surprising that the house that was deemed “little Rome” was not set up to effectively maintain a printing press. This remains a further avenue for analysis.
889 Both Dorothy Lawson and Anne Howard read Catholic texts to their servants as part of their effort to catechize their household, as discussed in chapter 4. Also, see Alexandra Walsham, “Domme Preachers’? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print,” Past and Present 168, 1 (2000): 80.
while others were written and produced on English shores. As Walsham states, “Printed books thus served as cultural ambassadors, cementing intellectual as well as political links between states in the forefront of efforts to re-Catholicize lost parts of Europe.” No doubt, England counted as one such lost state and missionary priests hoped that the written word would bring England back into the fold.

Anne Howard was another known woman who participated in the safe housing of a Catholic printing press. At the time of the press (c.1590/1) she was not a widow, however, her husband was imprisoned in the Tower of London thereby leaving her alone in her work. According to John Gerard, Howard housed a printing press for Robert Southwell where he produced his An Epistle of Comfort. Nancy Pollard Brown argues that Southwell’s press was most likely housed at Anne Howard’s house near modern day Spitalfields, northeast of central London. Arundel House on the Strand would have been too central a location for such a clandestine practice and Howard House in London, used by the Earl of Arundel’s brothers, would have proved too public. The house in Spitalfields would have benefited from the walls of Bishopsgate and a nearby enclosure, which added an additional form of privacy. Anne Howard’s social status, family connections, and no doubt ability to pick from the use of several

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892 Walsham, “Domme Preachers,” 100.
893 Brown, “Paperchase,” 121.
894 Brown, “Paperchase,” 122.
895 Gerard, Autobiography, 32.
896 Brown, “Paperchase,” 123.
897 Brown, “Paperchase,” 125.
houses benefited the placement of a secret printing press. While chapters three and four examined how Howard’s widowhood influenced her agency in harboring priests, hosting Mass, and catechizing the community, it appears the anonymity of living without her husband while he was imprisoned provided similar camouflage for a printing press that was never discovered.

Besides Dame Stonor’s press, the presence of a press in one of Howard’s houses, and Lady Montague desiring for a press to be in her house, to my knowledge there are no further examples of widows who maintained a clandestine printing operation in post-Reformation England, although evidence for secret presses is understandably bleak. What remains is the fact that two of the most prolific Jesuit writers, Edmund Campion and Robert Southwell, used the houses of a widow and a husbandless wife to hide printing presses. Thus, much like the act of harboring priests, the location of these presses was due to the advantages inherent in the position of the women and the houses’ location. It was about the use of space and the cultural and social meanings attributed to that space based on marital status.

Another opportunity for Catholics to aid in the survival of Catholicism was through patronage, including both the English mission at home and of Catholic institutions abroad. Olwen Hufton has argued that widows were prominent figures of patronage in Catholic countries, with numerous examples from Spain and Italy. With access to deceased husbands’ wealth and more time on their hands, widows are “fundamental figures in the history of fundraising from its very inception.”

While wealthy widows in countries such as Italy and Spain could freely dispense of their money for Catholic causes, the English widow’s act of distributing money to Catholic houses was one that defied penal laws. The 1585 “Act Against

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Jesuits and Seminaries” expressly forbid contributing “any money or other relief to or for any Jesuit, seminary priest, or such other priest, deacon, or religious or ecclesiastical person…or to or for the maintenance or relief of any college of Jesuits, or seminary already erected or ordained, or hereafter to be erected or ordained, in any the parts beyond the seas, or out of this realm in any foreign parts.” Nevertheless, the patronage provided by Anne Howard shows how a widow could participate in a transnational strategy to support Catholic communities abroad through her financial independence, despite penal laws. Susannah Brietz Monta has recently contributed to the rising attention given to patronage networks in England by focusing on Anne Howard. She states that Howard “contributed in material and intangible ways… to the fortification of a staunchly recusant strand of English Catholicism both in England and abroad.”

Howard’s patronage came in a variety of forms, from the support of Southwell’s printing press to monetary support for religious houses. She supported colleges and religious houses in Flanders, Italy, and Spain, and she sent Church ornaments she made herself to the Casa Professa in Rome. Her most tangible act of patronage came in the form of setting up a college in Ghent. Her biographer writes:

Buying a house in the City of Gant in Flanders, where those of them who had ended their studies might make their third probation, and better prepare themselves to labour in God’s vineyard according to their Institute; she furnish’d it with all things necessary for their use, maintain’d it during her life, and left competent means for the perpetuall maintenance thereof, with order that

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899 “Act Against Jesuits and Seminaries,” 487-488.
902 Lives, 218-220.
whenever it shall please God to convert England again to the Catholick Faith, that house should be transported and placed in the City of Carlile where; to the end that not only those of that city and her tenants thereabouts, but all the whole country adjoining might receive spiritual assistance by the preaching, teaching, and other pious labours and endeavours of those religious persons whom she intended should be maintain’d therein.  

Here, Howard’s biographer notes the future intent of the college in Ghent – to be transplanted back to England. Howard’s efforts to support the English College provided an education and vocation for English Catholics abroad while attempting to assist the future continuance of Catholicism in England. The international contribution of this Catholic widow comes full circle with her patronage of the English House at Ghent. Father Gerard, the same Jesuit she harbored as a vulnerable wife to an imprisoned husband in the 1590s, became the Rector of the house she founded as a widowed patroness. Monta argues, “Through the College, her patronage extended beyond England’s borders to an institution capable of training future generations of English Jesuits and of serving and proselytizing Englishmen and women abroad.” The financial independence she gained following the death of her husband in 1595 resulted in consistent and tangible support of the Catholic cause in ways unique to her social and economic autonomy as a widow.

One conclusion to be derived from Howard’s patronage is that her actions provide yet another example of the strong bond between Jesuits and Catholic widows. Anne Howard’s patronage most frequently supported the Society of Jesus. In this way, patronage was a sort of confessional statement. In his article “Essex Girls Abroad”, James E. Kelly argues, “a family’s patronage of a particular type of Catholic spirituality affected greatly the destination convent of

903 Lives, 219-220.
904 Gerard held this post from 1623 to 1627. Due to anonymity, it is possible that Gerard never knew who the foundress was. John Morris, The Life of Father John Gerard, of the Society of Jesus (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010), 502.
905 Monta, “Catholic Patronage,” 77.
women heading abroad... The choice of a specific Catholic spirituality was a political choice in itself, each option offering a totally different vision of the English Mission, of which convents must be considered a part.»

Howard’s frequent support of the Jesuit mission is evident in her biography by her Jesuit confessor, who wanted to “both extol her support for Catholics more generally and to claim her patronage for the Jesuits... he emphasizes that her political views and most of her patronage activities position her firmly behind the Jesuits.”

Her biographer wrote:

But to none, nor to all the rest together was she so beneficial and bountiful as to those of the Society of Jesus. For, besides her keeping ever some one of them in her house for the space of more than forty years, and the relieving of sundry occasions divers other particular persons of them, she gave every year a very large almes to their community here in England, and continued to her dying day. And to the end they might not want that, or a better means of support after her decease, she sent at several times 2500 pounds beyond seas, thereto be put in bank and increased till her death, and then the profit thereof to be employ’d for their use and maintenance here.

Howard was not the only Catholic widow to focus her patronage on the Society of Jesus. John Bossy estimated that between the Petre family and the widow Eleanor Brooksby, these individuals supplied the Jesuit mission in southern England with over a quarter of its regular income. Perhaps the strategy behind the section titled “How to procure the friendship of rich widows” within the anti-Jesuit polemical work, The Jesuits Intrigues, was grounded in some truth. As has been shown, the patronage of Catholic widows was largely reserved for Jesuit priests, thereby solidifying the link between widowed Catholic women and their “ghostly fathers”. Patronage was personal, it was political, and it provided a tangible outlet for Catholic

907 Monta, “Catholic Patronage”, 76.
910 Jesuites Intrigues, 36.
widows – at least those with money – to contribute to both the clandestine English Catholic community and to exiled communities by participating in “a share of Jesuit action”.  

**Conclusion**

The three efforts for sustaining Catholicism both at home and abroad discussed within this chapter – sending children to the continent, maintaining secret printing presses, and patronizing Catholic communities – were all part of a transnational, adaptive strategy for English Catholic survival. Within the historiography of English Catholic families who sent children across the Channel, there is little discussion of how marital status and widowhood could influence such an action. This void in research could be because widows represent such a small number of the population, their presence in the sources is not as prominent as men, or for the simple fact that they were not the only ones acting in the face of persecution. It is not the intent of this chapter to state that widows did more for sustaining Catholicism or that they were more successful than their married counterparts – although, in some cases, being a sort of a social pariah was beneficial to an individual who strove for invisibility from authorities. Instead, these women highlight a variance in lived experience and reveal a new level of complexity in a given community.

Three themes emerge as particular to the experience of Catholic widows. First, due to guardianship laws and the active Court of Wards, the legal limitations of widowhood oftentimes required immediate and deliberate action on the part of widows to ensure maternal authority over her children. The pressure from legal threats to guardianship led widows such as Elizabeth Cary

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912 James Kelly’s study of Essex families does reveal the potential found in examining patterns of patronage and placement of children in convents on the continent. He argues that the destination convent for Catholic daughters indicated a family’s choice of a specific Catholic spirituality, and therefore acted as a political choice, Kelly, “Essex Girls Abroad,” 44-45.
and Rebecca Salvin to act on their religion in a way different in both speed and manner from a married Catholic. Second, while the prevailing historiography of the role of women in the English Catholic Community has focused on the actions of wives in religiously unequal marriages, widowhood brought a distinct opportunity to raise children in Catholicism without worrying about the influence of a husband, utilizing households for printing presses, and dedicating resources for Catholic institutions abroad.\textsuperscript{913} Catholic widows had no fear of damaging their husband’s prospects with their actions and were free to act without the input of a Protestant or conformist husband, as seen through the actions of Dorothy Lawson and Elizabeth Cary at the death of their Protestant husbands. Wives had to balance their obligations; widows, on the other hand, had more options. Third, there was a clear link between widows and Jesuit priests, as perceived by both Jesuits and Protestant authorities, which differed from a Jesuit’s relationship to a married woman. The Jesuits’ role as “ghostly fathers” to these women without male guidance appeared to make widows part of a particular strategy for the Catholic mission, as seen through Protestant propaganda and the actions of Jesuits.\textsuperscript{914}

Each of these points reveals a gendered history, dependent on marital status, not only for the Catholic mission in England, but also for the English exile communities on the continent. The dramatic shift from wife to widow changed the role of motherhood for a woman because she became the sole provider in terms of her children’s education, guidance, protection, and placement in society. The absence of a fatherly figure and protector drove some women to remarry and others to seek help from kin to care for their children. Still others, as shown here, used this power vacuum in the family to foster their religious authority over their children, raise

\textsuperscript{913} Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow”, 131. For studies that highlight the role of wives in English Catholic survival, see Newman, “The Role of Women”; Bastow, “Worth Nothing, but very Wilful”; and Watson, “Disciplined Disobedience?”.

\textsuperscript{914} As discussed in chapter two.
them as Catholics, and sustain international connections with Catholics in convents and seminaries abroad. While widows were not alone in their efforts to maintain their faith in the face of penal persecution, they were singular in the ways they adapted to penal and wardship laws, and sustained their faith through the financial and social autonomy connected with their marital status. They established connections with Catholics on the continent that strengthened not only Catholicism within nuclear families in England, but also contributed towards transnational English Catholic movements in exile that adapted in the face of reform and persecution. Katy Gibbons rightly argues that including women in accounts of English exile open up opportunities to understand the role of women in the English Catholic community.

Likewise, considering women in various stages of life – such as widows – highlights how not just gender, but marital status had a hand in such religious agency. These Catholic widows not only sent children abroad as a bid to preserve Catholicism for a future Catholic England, but they also harbored priests, created hubs for Jesuit meetings within their houses, hosted clandestine Mass, hid vestments, catechized their communities, housed printing presses, and patronized continental religious communities. This suggests that there is more work to be done on the ways gender and marital status influenced religious agency in the midst of persecution. Since widowed individuals ran twenty percent of the households in early modern England, and more than sixty percent of the post-Reformation Catholic households were

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915 Elizabeth Cary, Rebecca Salvin, Dorothy Lawson, and Jane Wiseman never remarried, perhaps because remarriage would take away their newfound autonomy.
considered matriarchal, it is time for Catholic widows to emerge from their historical and historiographical marginalization.\footnote{For a discussion of the number of widowed households, see Broadway, “A Jacobean Recusant Widow,” and Ralph A. Houlbrooke, The English Family. For a discussion of matriarchal households, see Hugh Aveling, “Catholic Households of Yorkshire,” 88.}
In the corner of the kitchen at Baddesley Clinton is an opening in the stone floor, which exposes a small wooden ladder that leads down into a long and narrow passage. The hole is now covered with a glass panel that functions both as a protection against curious tourists and as a window into the tight, dank space below. Tourists who pack into this well-preserved medieval house in Warwickshire can easily miss this remnant of Elizabethan England. The furniture, replica food, and hanging herbs compete with the unassuming corner, and the grandness of the Great Hall in the next room summons visitors to continue their tour without stopping to peer into what was once a medieval sewer. Yet, the plaque above this hole beckons a second look with the label “Tudor Refuge”. It was in this sewer that the Jesuit John Gerard and eight other priests hid during the 1587 house search described in Gerard’s Autobiography.

The infamous search, which ended with all nine men avoiding detection, remains an oft-cited example of Catholic resilience against the penal laws of Elizabethan England and underscores the role women played in harboring priests, as this was the house maintained and defended by the widow, Eleanor Brooksby, and her sister Anne Vaux. The hide was long and large, at least compared to other priest holes, thus ensuring that the structure of the hide could accommodate nine grown men for more than four hours. Its location in what was once a sewer concealed the priests below ground in an undesirable place easily overlooked by the searchers. While the structure of the priest hide itself was effective, this dissertation has shown that the widowhood of Eleanor Brooksby also contributed towards the effectiveness of the hide since the

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918 I visited Baddesley Clinton in September 2014. Descriptions of the space reflect the conditions of the house at this time.
searchers remained delayed at the threshold of the house waiting for the widow to get up before conducting their search. Gerard wrote, “Outside the ruffians were bawling and yelling, but the servants held the door fast. They said the mistress of the house, a widow, was not yet up, but was coming down at once to answer them. This gave us enough time to stow ourselves and our belongings.” Respect for the widow Brooksby provided both the time and opportunity for the priests to stow away. Thus, the location and composition of the priest hole, together with the gendered preconceptions attached to the house itself due to the status of the owner, contributed towards the success of the hide.

This dissertation began with a discussion of John Gerard’s selection of the widow Anne Line to maintain his household in London due to her ability and availability as a widow. The study ends with this modern-day glimpse at a surviving priest hole, the place within which nine priests hid and escaped capture. The analytical bookends of a widow who harbored priests and a priest hole that protected priests underscores the two driving questions behind this dissertation: who participated in the English Catholic community and where did the acts of preservation and resistance take place? This dissertation’s investigation of the people, widows in particular, within the clandestine post-Reformation Catholic community uncovered a relationship between widowhood and the households that preserved and promoted Catholicism that adds greater complexity to previous studies of female agency within the community. The social structures that accompanied widowhood had a profound impact on the “where” of Catholic preservation – the household – a space within which Catholics harbored priests, performed secret Mass, and reared children in the faith. It was within the household that the cultural preconceptions, social independence, and economic autonomy of widowhood converged to manipulate, adapt, create,

and negotiate a space for Catholic preservation. The gendered roles of widowhood influenced the use, perception, and agency of space, thereby showing that the “who” and “where” of Catholic preservation were mutually contingent on one another, highlighting a strong bond between the effectiveness of the bricks and mortar of place, and the people who interacted and gave meaning to that space.

This study builds off the work of historians such as John Bossy, Alexandra Walsham, Michael Questier and others who have unfastened the study of the post-Reformation English Catholic community from the hagiographic and apologetic studies of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century to reveal a dynamic and fluid community that was more than a marginalized minority. The emergence of theories and methodologies such as social history, cultural history, gender history, and spatial analysis have extended the field beyond histories that focused on the lay men or priests in the post-Reformation English Catholic community to include the active role of women. Through the work of these historians and others, the Catholic women who lived and worked in this haphazard and complex community have surfaced from their silence. In the 1980s, some scholars debated the ways the European Reformation affected the lives of women, thereby positioning women as passive participants in a system of social, cultural, and religious change that they seemed powerless to overcome. Yet in recent decades, scholars have shown that women, both lay and religious, upset gendered roles, disrupted


922 In 1983, Steven Ozment argued that by treating women as spiritual equals, rejecting celibacy, and legalizing divorce, Protestant reformers actually elevated women’s status, *When Father’s Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). In opposition to this suggestion that the Reformation was positive for women, Lyndal Roper argued that the Reformation constituted a “crisis in gender relations” that simply redefined male power and control over women, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
preconceptions of femininity, and actively participated and shaped the English Catholic community in particular. Colleen Seguin maintains, “Few assertions in the contentious arena of English Reformation historiography have been met with such scholarly approbation as the argument that Catholic women were of central importance to recusancy. Historians widely acknowledge that lay female priest harborers were particularly crucial in the realm of household religion, responsible for illegally sheltering and protecting the peripatetic priests on whom Catholic religious practice depended.” The more recent volume, Gender, Catholicism, and Spirituality, edited by Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen M. Mangion, reviews the growing research on women who defied categories, in some instances upset, and challenged early modern gendered social structures.

This dissertation at once contributes to and challenges this current historiography of active female agency in the midst of a patriarchal society in three ways. First, it challenges analyses of such agency to consider the variant relationships, economic opportunities, social dependencies, and cultural preconceptions that accompany divergent stages in the female life cycle. As shown in the preceding chapters, the opportunities and limitations that accompanied


widowhood in early modern England society differed from those of married or single women, or men for that matter. Widows could act differently and were treated differently due to their place in society and their relationship to men in an early modern patriarchal society. Second, by merging a study of Catholic widows with a consideration of the space within which women were most effective – the household – this dissertation argues that the use, manipulation, adaptation, and the creation of space was different for widows than other women. Spatial analysis provides tangible proof for the way marital status could influence agency in a clandestine community. Third, while other studies dichotomously categorize women as either upsetting gender roles or playing victim to patriarchal structures, this dissertation depicts women who exemplified both. Many of these widows manipulated gendered preconceptions and generated opportunity from such patriarchal structures, while inverting and defying gender roles through their authority and property. Female agency did not always hinge on resistance against early modern gender roles. At times, these early modern patriarchal structures and stereotypes were catalysts for action.

The first two chapters highlighted the various patriarchal structures that accompanied women upon entering widowhood, in order to set the context for how widows could maintain a unique degree of autonomy and authority in the household. Chapter 1 considered the overwhelming focus, both in early modern recusancy records and in the modern historiography of the English Catholic community, on the role of wives. The previous scholarly equation of “women” as “wives” ignores the variant relationships to law, society, family, and economics that marital status dictated. For example, John Bossy argued, “On few points in the early history of English Catholicism is there such a unanimous convergence of evidence as on the importance of
the part played in it by women and specifically by wives.” Yet, of the individuals most often referenced by scholars of female agency, widows form a majority. Alexandra Walsham suggests that Bossy’s depiction of the English Catholic community as a matriarchy requires qualification, and concedes, “the importance of wives in the history of recusancy does not indisputably demonstrate that they played a pivotal part in the history of early modern English Catholicism.” Indeed, recusancy records should not be the only sources used to determine agency. Married women’s presence in recusancy records is undeniable, as is their prominence in correspondence between members of the Privy Council and local magistrates. However, this existence should not conclude that wives were the only women active in the Catholic community. Biographies, state papers, autobiographies, and correspondence point to a number of widows, particularly in the history of priest harboring. An analysis that considers marital status and the role of widows reveals opportunities that widowhood presented that were unavailable to married women.

For instance, it appears that authorities were hesitant to prosecute widows, in both England and elsewhere, due to their gender and liminal position in society. For example, widows who published illicit books in early modern Antwerp enjoyed a greater degree of freedom from authorities than their male counterparts did. Victoria Christman found that “Although the local judges were not always able to ignore the crimes of the city’s bookmen, the widows’ status rendered Antwerp’s female publishers practically invisible to imperial officials, thereby enabling them to continue their illicit production unimpeded by judicial censure.” Of course, the penal laws against priest harboring in early modern England did land some widows financially.

927 Walsham, Church Papists, 81.
destitute or resulted in the loss of life. However, a pattern between both Antwerp and England shows that while laws could be strict, the enforcement of such laws varied, particularly when it came to enforcement against widows. By peeling back the variant social structures that accompanied marital status, and the impact these structures had on the legal culpability of widows as shown in the first chapter, suddenly the role of “women” in the English Catholic community becomes complicated to define in a holistic fashion.

The complexity inherent in definitions was the topic of chapter two, as it considered the cultural and economic structures that appeared upon widowhood that separated the experience of widows from that of married or single women. The competing stereotypes of widows as chaste, pious, solitary, together with vulnerable, weak, and dangerous, depicted this group of women in early modern England as destitute and socially outcast; identities that were advantageous to Catholic widows who desired to remain invisible to Protestant authorities. These stereotypes, and the actions and interactions they influenced between widows and Protestant authorities, together with the economic and social autonomy experienced in widowhood, at times camouflaged illegal actions. These advantages of widowhood tangibly manifested in the form of the household – a space bequeathed through a husband’s will, controlled and maintained by the widow, isolated from male hierarchy, and dedicated for Catholic use. The widow’s house was where the legal ambiguity of Catholic widows, cultural isolation through stereotypes, possibilities for economic autonomy, and actions of religious conscience all merged to create a space ripe for Catholic survival efforts. The general legal, economic, social, and cultural constructions outlined in chapters one and two were vital elements to understanding the ways widows used households to protect and promote Catholicism amidst their local communities.
While chapters one and two examined the social structures within which widows existed in early modern England, the analytical framework of the remaining chapters shifted from a general analysis of widowhood to individual analyses of three uses of household space, dependent on these broad frameworks, that at the same time protected, promoted, and sustained Catholicism within the household. While the household was itself a physical place comprised of physical material that contained smaller and interior places within it – priest holes, attics, thresholds, courtyards, chambers, chapels, etc. – it was also an abstract space that was defined by social, economic, and cultural stereotypes, conventions, and structures surrounding widowhood. The use of such space altered depending on the actions and interactions that happened within the walls. By examining the lives, actions, and lived space of more than sixty individual widows, the remaining chapters threw into sharper relief the impact of widowhood on harboring priests, hosting clandestine Mass, catechizing and supporting the local community, printing illicit material, patronizing religious communities, and sending children to convents and seminaries abroad.

In particular, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 revealed that a Catholic widow’s household was malleable and adaptive for a variety of uses within the same space. Chapter 3 investigated the use of widows’ households as centers for priest harboring and suggested that the manipulation of cultural stereotypes of widows as weak and vulnerable women created a sort of cultural camouflage, which could add an additional layer of privacy to the household. Chapter 4 proposed that widows’ households were a permeable, semi-public sphere where widows simultaneously encouraged a clandestine community, complete with the celebration of the Mass, administration of the sacraments, and catechization of the community, while protecting itself from outsiders. As a solitary, adaptable, connected, and well-managed space for clandestine worship, households
challenged notions of public versus private space, revealing that a household could be both. In addition, wealthy widows’ typical role in society as charitable and hospitable neighbors influenced Catholic widows’ agency in secretly promoting Catholicism in their local community. Chapter 5 moved beyond influence in and around the household, and examined possibilities for participation in a wider international Catholic network, inherent in widowhood, through the rearing of Catholic children, sending children to convents and seminaries on the continent, producing illicit Catholic material through clandestine printing presses in the household, and patronizing Catholic communities both at home and abroad. This final chapter expands the notion of household space to include the resultant actions that occurred from the education and support experienced in the home and transferred to schools, convents, and communities on the continent. The agency of the household was not confined to the material place of the house. This chapter suggests that widows’ education of their children in the household, act of sending children abroad for Catholic vocations and education, patronage of religious communities with private funds, and protection for the printing of Catholic texts contributed towards an English Catholic community with porous national boundaries, connected by faith and adaptive in their strategy to survive penal laws. The people who emerged from Catholic widows’ households and crossed the channel suggests a psychological or metaphorical notion of space that was not confined to a household, county, or country, but instead opens up opportunities for connections across the English Channel.

Considering these chapters together, it is apparent that the use of domestic space was not exclusive. Multiple spaces with a variety of functions existed within the same house. Space was dynamic, interchangeable, and re-defined owing to the opportunities for autonomy and authority inherent in widowhood. At the same time, households could act as a private refuge, become a
hospitable hub for the local community, act as clandestine centers of worship, produce illegal Catholic texts, become places for poor relief, or be the beginning point for a religious life abroad. The house itself was a shifting and living space, and the preceding chapters have shown that such space assimilated both the restrictions and opportunities that followed the owner’s gender and marital status.

The phenomenon of cultural camouflage and the degree of social and economic self-sufficiency enjoyed by widows is most apparent in the lives and actions of Lady Magdalen Montague, Dorothy Lawson, Anne Howard, Elizabeth Vaux, Eleanor Brooksby, and others who used their cultural, social, and legal autonomy to protect, promote, and sustain their faith. These examples of the gendered manipulation of space, based also on the social structures that accompanied widowhood in particular, closely resembles the actions of other widows outside of the early modern English Catholic mold. Patterns emerge in other instances of minority religious communities, both outside the geography of this study and beyond its timeframe. Widowed Catholics in seventeenth-century Ireland similarly used their households to harbor priests and host clandestine Mass. Mary Browne maintained Catholic priests in Dublin. Anastasia Walsh opened her home as a refuge for meetings between members of the Catholic mission. The widows Sisley Walsh, Joan Roche, Cecily Finglas, Elizabeth St. Lawrence, Elizabeth Nugent, and Lattice Shee all harbored priests during their widowhood. The widow Joanna Eustace harbored the priest Dermot Byrne who celebrated Mass in her house at Ouldcourt. Like Lady Cecily Stonor in England, the widow Margaret Bell died in prison due to her recusancy and her history of sheltering priests.  

I am grateful to Bronaugh McShane for sharing her own research on Irish women who negotiated the religious changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. McShane completed her Ph.D. at Maynooth University in 2015.
Outside of Catholicism, the lives of widows within early modern English Protestant non-conformist groups such as Quakers, Presbyterians, and Puritans show that widowhood presented opportunities for women of various religious beliefs. Rebecca Traverse (1609-1688), a widow of a tobacconist, was drawn to Quakerism following her attendance of a public meeting in Broad Street. After her conversion, Traverse regularly hosted George Fox at her house when he visited London, and she used her house as a meeting place for the Second Day Morning Meeting.\textsuperscript{930} The Puritan Lady Grace Mildmay (c. 1552-1620) used her house for religious observances, charitable works, and a medical practice for the community.\textsuperscript{931} The Presbyterian Lady Sarah Hewley (1627-1710) founded a chapel in York in 1692. Following the death of her husband in 1697, she created an almshouse in York for poor Presbyterian women.\textsuperscript{932} This relationship between widowhood the creation and adaptation of space further confirms a connection between the autonomy presented by widowhood and the use of the house for religious dissent.

English and Irish women were not the only ones to capitalize on the opportunities afforded by the economic and social independence of widowhood. Consider Angela Hernandez, or Isabel Jimenez, also called la Hardona in Cordova, the widow and matriarch of a Morisco home in sixteenth-century Spain. In much the same way Lady Magdalen Montague’s house was called “little Rome” by onlookers, Hernandez’ house was said to be “like a mosque,” within

\textsuperscript{930} Rebecca Traverse, \textit{A Testimony for God’s Everlasting Truth, as it Hath Been Learned of and in Jesus} (1669) \textit{Early English Books Online}, Web, December 2016. A list in the National Archives shows Traverse as a writer and also lists 2/3 of the printers of illicit books as widows. \textit{Information as to the printers of the following books}, 1664, at the National Archives, London, SP 29/109 f. 159.


\textsuperscript{932} See Hewley’s biography in Cathy Hartley, \textit{A Historical Dictionary of British Women} (London: Routledge, 2003), 216.
which she taught Islam to family members. Similar to historians of the English Catholic community, Mary Elizabeth Perry has examined the ways Morisco women, like Angela Hernandez, resisted interference into personal beliefs, particularly within the family, by creating and maintaining a private space for clandestine education and worship. As in England, this form of resistance naturally emanated from the household.

Unfortunately, history is rife with examples of religious or cultural persecution against individuals or groups. Perhaps there are similar patterns of clandestine efforts of protection and resistance within the minority communities in Maoist China, the Jewish community during the Holocaust, the persecution of Hindus in the 1970s, or the conflict emerging from the Rwandan Civil War culminating in the genocide against the Tutsi population, just to name a few. It is striking that when examining the clandestine movements of the Underground Railroad in the nineteenth-century United States, the infamous “Moses” of slaves to freedom, Harriet Tubman, was in fact a widow during her most active abolitionist years. Discovering patterns in the behavior and opportunities of widows across geographical, temporal, and religious lines is beneficial in understanding how both gender and marital status influenced agency in minority communities.

In a broad sense, this dissertation calls for a deeper look at female agency amidst persecuted groups and argues that the cultural preconceptions, economic freedoms, and social independence of widowhood affected and created unique opportunities for widows, different

933 Mary Elizabeth Perry, *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 80. I am grateful to Mary Elizabeth Perry for her emailed response to me regarding the marital status of Angela Hernandez. While Perry states that she does not have any firm proof that Angela Hernandez was actually a widow, she remarks that it seems very likely. Hernandez was the one accused of keeping her house as a mosque, not her husband, and many Morisco men had died in wars between the Christians and Moriscos in Spain.

from single or married women. As shown above, this pattern could potentially be applied to other communities of religious or cultural minorities, thereby facilitating new insight into the inner workings of preservation and resistance across both time and space. While conditions of widowhood and the context of persecution understandably vary between historical examples, there may be a broader argument to be made regarding the agency of the femme sole.

While this conclusion quietly nods toward possibilities for future investigation, this dissertation, more specifically, contributes towards the history of the post-Reformation English Catholic community, a time and place that is particularly well suited for analyses of space and gender since the clandestine faith was largely relegated to the feminine sphere of the household by penal laws. It deepens the understanding of female agency present in the historiography of the past few decades by highlighting the predominance of widows in histories of women who harbored priests and maintained Catholic households. It considers how gendered frameworks – cultural, economic, social, and legal – contributed towards agency separate from religious inclinations or motivations and it proposes that spatial analysis is a viable and tangible way to perceive how gender and marital status manipulated and adapted the places used for preservation and resistance. Fittingly, Dorothy Lawson’s biographer stated centuries ago that Lawson became a “solitary sparrow in the holes of a rock,” thereby highlighting the connection between a widow and the private and secluded places she inhabited.\footnote{William Palmes, \textit{The Life of Mrs. Dorothy Lawson, of St. Antony’s, near Newcastle-on-Tyne} (London: Charles Dolman, 1855), 23.} It is this relationship between domestic space and widowhood that contributes towards a deeper understanding of female agency within the post-Reformation English Catholic community.
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Lansdowne MS 84, f. 104  A copy of Lord North’s letter to Lord Burghley, 1597
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UDDCA 2  Stapleton Papers

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MS 3205  Talbot Papers, 1506-1612
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#### Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Manuscript Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vol 10</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>[868], p. 340</td>
<td>Harry Vyvyan to Sir Robert Cecil, 1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol 12</td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>[795], p. 366</td>
<td>Declaration of John Ellys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol 17</td>
<td>[985]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Salisbury documents on the examination of Lady Lovell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol 17</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>[988]</td>
<td>Thomas Wilson to the Earl of Salisbury,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol 17</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>[1256]</td>
<td>Jane, Lady Lovell to the Earl of Salisbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol 20</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>[426], p. 225</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Edmondes to the Earl of Salisbury, Aug. 10, 1608</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Hatfield House Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Manuscript Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vol. 5</td>
<td>1591-1595</td>
<td>[51], 24</td>
<td>Richard Young to [the Queen]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. 11</td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>[872], 362</td>
<td>Jo. Byrde to Sir Robert Cecil, Aug. 27, 1601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. 12</td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>[795], 366</td>
<td>Declaration f John Ellys, of Bradmayne, Dorset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### State Papers Domestic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 43</td>
<td>10 Junij 1580</td>
<td>Recusants in Lincolnshire, June 26, 1580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 59</td>
<td>x Julij, 1580</td>
<td>26 September, 1580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 187</td>
<td>16. February, 1580, Whitehall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 499</td>
<td>[Meeting] 30 Augusti, 1581</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 505</td>
<td>[Meeting] Grenewich, 5 Septembris, 1581</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 565</td>
<td>[Meeting] xxvii Novembris, 1581, at Whitehall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/13 f. 687</td>
<td>[Meeting] 25th Aprilis, Grenewiche, 1582</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/20 f. 12</td>
<td>[Meeting] At the Court of Downamney, September 1592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/20 f. 26</td>
<td>[Meeting] At the court of Sudley Castle, September 1592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/20 f. 34</td>
<td>[Meeting] At the court of Sherborne, September 1592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/20 f. 301</td>
<td>[Meeting] At the court at St. James’, primo Aprilis, 1593</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/20 f. 424</td>
<td>[Meeting] xix die Junie (sic), 1593</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/20 f. 498</td>
<td>[Meeting] xix Julij, 1593</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC 2/26 f. 279</td>
<td>[Meeting] 6 July</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/152 f. 97</td>
<td>Mr. Topclyffe’s note of particulars against William Dean and Edward Osborne, Feb. 1582</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/164 f. 24</td>
<td>The Bishop and Mayor of Winchester, and others of the city, to Walsyngham, Dec. 1583,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/164 f. 79</td>
<td>Declaration of George Law, made before Lord Buckhurst, Dec. 1583</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/168 f. 13</td>
<td>Note of misdemeanours, Feb. 5, 1584.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/175 f. 32</td>
<td>Names of the recusants listed within the county of Lancaster, 1584</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/181 f. 210</td>
<td>The Queen to the Justices of Assize in the county of Norfolk, August 1585</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/187 f. 9</td>
<td>The examinations of Ralph Palmer and John Smithe, 1586</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/206 f. 177</td>
<td>Names of Justices of the Peace left out of commission, 1587</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/208 f. 22</td>
<td>Earl of Kent to the Council, January 1588</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/208 f. 75</td>
<td>Francis Cromwell, Sheriff of Cambridge and Huntingdon, to Council, February 1588</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/208 f. 91</td>
<td>William Cave, sheriff, and other commissioners of Leicestershire to the Council, February 1588</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/238 f. 118</td>
<td>Thos. Philippes to Thos. Barnes, March 22, 1591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/238 f. 185</td>
<td>Edward Hastings to Lord Treas. Burghley, April 1591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/240 f. 68</td>
<td>Proclamation by the Queen for remedy of the treasons which, under pretext of religion, have been plotted by seminaries and Jesuits, October 1591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/240 f. 71a</td>
<td>Articles annexed to the Commission for recusants, October 1591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/240 f. 172</td>
<td>Answer of John Barcroft to interrogatories, 1591.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/245 f. 212</td>
<td>Particulars of other harbourers of priests in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Westmoreland, and Cumberland. October 24, 1593.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/248 f. 160</td>
<td>List by Rich. Young of seven recusant servants found in Mr. Wiseman’s house, 1594.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/248 f. 170</td>
<td>Examination of Wm. Holmes. April 21, 1594.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/249 f. 31</td>
<td>Pardon to Grace, wife of William Claxton for harbouring a priest. June 30, 1594,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 12/281 f. 76</td>
<td>Reasons why a man should not pay for his wife’s recusancy, July 1601</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 13/e. f.001</td>
<td>J. Snowden to Cecil, June 20, 1591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 14/18 f. 64</td>
<td>Confession of Anth. Sherlock, a priest, Jan. 30, 1606.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 14/19 f.136</td>
<td>List of relics, church stuff, &amp;c. belonging to Mrs. Brookesby and Mrs. Anne Vaux. March, 1606.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 14/216/2 f. 181</td>
<td>Examination of Lady Agnes Wenman, December 5, 1605.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 14/216/2 f. 208</td>
<td>Anne Vaux to Henry Garnet, March 21, 1606</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 15/27/1 f.40</td>
<td>Henry Earl of Huntingdon to Sec. Walsingham, 1581</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 29/109 f. 159</td>
<td>Information as to the printers of the following books, 1664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 53/19 f. 643</td>
<td>Anthony Tyrell’s answer to the articles, August 31, 1586.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP 63/151 f. 253</td>
<td>Lord Deputy to Burghley, April 1590</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EP 09-02, p. 63  Burial register, March 1631/2
NRO 1954/5  Durham record, M. 824. Transcribed from a copy printed by Marwood for Sir Cuthbert Sharp
NRO 1954/64  Notes on Salvins of Croxdale and Thornton Hall
NRO 1954/71  ‘extracted from an original Roman Catholic Recusant Roll formerly in the Clerk of the Peace Office, Durham, but now
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354


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