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978-1-107-09977-7 - The Dynamics of Inheritance on the Shakespearean Stage

Michelle M. Dowd

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THE DYNAMICS OF INHERITANCE ON THE SHAKESPEAREAN STAGE

Early modern England's system of patrilineal inheritance, in which the eldest son inherited his father's estate and title, was one of the most significant forces affecting social order in the period. Demonstrating that early modern theater played a unique and vital role in shaping how inheritance was understood, Michelle M. Dowd explores some of the common contingencies that troubled this system: marriage and remarriage, misbehaving male heirs, and families with only daughters. Shakespearean drama helped question and reimagine inheritance practices, making room for new formulations of gendered authority, family structure, and wealth transfer. Through close readings of canonical and noncanonical plays by Shakespeare, Webster, Jonson, and others, Dowd pays particular attention to the significance of space in early modern inheritance and the historical relationship between dramatic form and the patrilineal economy. Her book will interest researchers and students of early modern drama, Shakespeare, gender studies, and socioeconomic history.

MICHELLE M. DOWD is Associate Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Her previous publications include *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (2009), *Early Modern Women on the Fall: An Anthology* (co-edited with Thomas Festa, 2012), *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama* (co-edited with Natasha Korda, 2011), and *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* (co-edited with Julie A. Eckerle, 2007). She has also published on early modern drama and women's writing in journals including *Modern Philology*, *English Literary Renaissance*, *Renaissance Drama*, and *Shakespeare Studies*.

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When quoting from early modern manuscripts and printed texts in original or facsimile editions, I have retained original orthography except for silently expanding contractions, changing long s to short, and modernizing the letters i, j, u, and v where necessary. Titles of early modern works are given modern capitalization. Unless otherwise indicated, dates of plays given parenthetically in the text refer to the estimated year (or date range) of first performance found in Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays, Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Authors, Titles, Dramatic Companies, &c.*, rev. S. Schoenbaum, 3rd edn., rev. Sylvia Stoler Wagonhein (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). Specific editions and publication dates of plays cited are given in the notes. Dates in parentheses for all other nondramatic texts indicate the year that a work was first published, unless otherwise indicated.