



# Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England (New Cultural Studies)

*Natasha Korda*

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*Shakespeare's Domestic Economies* explores representations of female subjectivity in Shakespearean drama from a refreshingly new perspective, situating *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Othello*, and *Measure for Measure* in relation to early modern England's nascent consumer culture and competing conceptions of property. Drawing evidence from legal documents, economic treatises, domestic manuals, marriage sermons, household inventories, and wills to explore the realities and dramatic representations of women's domestic roles, Natasha Korda departs from traditional accounts of the commodification of women, which maintain that throughout history women have been "trafficked" as passive objects of exchange between men.

In the early modern period, Korda demonstrates, as newly available market goods began to infiltrate households at every level of society, women emerged as never before as the "keepers" of household properties. With the rise of consumer culture, she contends, the housewife's managerial function assumed a new form, becoming increasingly centered around caring for the objects of everyday life—objects she was charged with keeping as if they were her own, in spite of the legal strictures governing women's property rights. Korda deftly shows how their positions in a complex and changing social formation allowed women to exert considerable control within the household domain, and in some areas to thwart the rule of fathers and husbands.

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