

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: A True Guide to Glory: Women, Social Order, and Gender Expectations in Seventeenth-Century English Funeral Sermons

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This project analyzed the language and content of seventeenth-century English funeral sermons for women using Voyant, a web-based text reading and analysis environment. With the societal and religious changes brought about through the Protestant Reformation, women became the focus of concerns regarding disorder and chaos. To alleviate some of these concerns, greater restrictions were placed on women in their public and private lives. These restrictions even went so far as to extend from life into death. The funeral sermons that were given for English women would only include those whose lives could be used as models for other women to aspire to. This project's analysis suggests that early modern funeral sermons, especially those for women, when preached and later printed, served to help maintain social order and hierarchical gender expectations. Working with a corpus of data of this size, 206 funeral sermons (73 women and 135 men) comprised of approximately 3.2 million words, would prove nearly impossible to get through by reading in a traditional sense. However, Voyant allows a different kind of close reading of the texts by using a digital tool that creates data that can then be visualized, examined, and contextualized. Ultimately digital tools allow for effectively communicating the complex

concerns about social order and women's place at the center of that order in early modern England.