

**Providence,
Emotion and Self-Writing in England,
c.1660 – c.1720**

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Abstract

This thesis offers a new interpretation of providentialism in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. Historians have seen this as a transitional period in providential belief and expression, between heightened engagement and gradual decline, and have provided us with many perspectives on the changing role of providence in English culture. But we still have yet to understand fully the role of providence in individual lives, where change occurred at an experiential and quotidian level. This thesis aims to fill this historiographical gap by examining practical, subjective and individual experiences of providentialism. Drawing on first-person narratives such as diaries and memoirs, conceptualised as sites of personal agency, it sheds light at the micro-level on broader shifts in providential belief and thought. These primary sources show how individuals exercised a personal providentialism, writing their relationship with God's providence into their own emerging sense of self. Investigation of the emotional resonances of providentialism also emphasizes its centrality to inner lives and personal identity, characterised by subtle but significant modes of feeling. Several case studies demonstrate how people constantly shaped and re-shaped themselves, and moulded ideas and beliefs relating to providence to fit particular social and religious circumstances and changing intellectual concerns. Providentialism is therefore shown to be elastic and subjective – a subjectivity that ensured the adaptability and durability of the concept of providence in an era of atheism, science and expanding secular authority. Far from seeing this period as a stage in an inexorable decline, the thesis shows how people continued to find uses for providence in creative and imaginative ways to make sense of themselves and their world in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university. None of the material in this thesis has been published prior to the date of submission.

Victoria A. Lewis

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List of Abbreviations

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BL	British Library, London
CCED	Clergy of the Church of England Database
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
H. MSS	Harrowby Manuscripts Trust, Sandon Hall, Stafford
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past & Present</i>
W. Yorks. AS	West Yorkshire Archive Service, at either Kirklees, Central Library, Huddersfield, or West Yorkshire History Centre, Wakefield, as specified
YAS	Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds
YML	York Minster Library, York

Notes: All dates are in New Style with the years adjusted to begin on 1 January rather than 25 March.

1. Introduction

During the early modern period individuals shared in a common belief that the events of their lives were the work of an interfering, all-powerful, ever-present God. They understood that interference within the parameters of an idea: providence. In the hands, hearts and minds of those who subscribed to the belief there was nothing providence could not explain, from accidents and disasters, to the fates of individuals, communities and nations. Providence was a mysterious, malleable belief system that fundamentally shaped how early modern individuals viewed the world, themselves and each other in countless different ways.

Providence in some guise features in most religions, but it played such a critical role in early modern English lives because sixteenth-century reformers had placed renewed emphasis on God's omnipotence, and had advanced specific ideas about the tool with which God wielded his power and manifested his will. By the late sixteenth century divine providence was a diverse but essential feature of English Protestantism, of a Protestant calendar and of a popular culture. By the late seventeenth century, however, the position of providence in English culture had changed irrevocably. Parties during the religious crisis and civil conflict of the mid-seventeenth century had employed providence to guide and justify their actions to such an extent that by the Restoration some felt it had lost much of its meaning and credibility, leaving it in need of reconfiguration. Providence would then enter a transitional period where it was tested and re-moulded to fit changing ideological and intellectual conditions. Providentialism during this period of transition is the subject of this thesis.

This study presents an account of the lived, subjective experience of providentialism *c.*1660-*c.*1720. In doing so it addresses the question of how such a period of transition happened at an individual level. It does not seek to understand how individuals utilised providence in, for example, their economic behaviour alone. Historians have considered the reconfiguration and decline of providentialism and the changing role of providence in politics, attitudes towards the environment, economic behaviour and in the answering of social questions. But the historiography does not provide a means of seeing these concerns in one place, as they coexisted and played out in individual lives. Therefore, this thesis will provide as full a picture as possible of what providence did for individuals, how they used it, how it felt, and how it shaped their perceptions of themselves. By using the lens of personal experience it will contribute an account of the wider changes and continuities in providence during this period of transition, in one place.

It will be argued in this thesis that providentialism was by its nature subjective. It was exercised subjectively and it in turn informed individual subjectivities. Because of this, providence could be adapted in ways that ensured its appeal and utility even while it was tested and challenged. The elasticity of the belief allowed for its endurance into the eighteenth century. It will therefore be argued that by studying the subjective experience of providentialism we can understand how individuals moulded the concept and their practice to reflect changing intellectual and ideological conditions, as well as their diverse social, religious and economic circumstances, making providence serviceable for new and future living.

It will be suggested that the case studies of autobiographical writers offered here illustrate the continuing practice of personal providentialism – the kind of providentialism where God was seen directly at work in individual lives. This is

significant because historians have cited this period as witnessing the decline of this kind of providentialism, in favour of national providentialism or naturalistic, general providence. It will also be demonstrated that the individuals studied here exercised and enacted their providentialism through a creative act of memory, in self-writing. That exercise involved and provoked distinct modes of feeling and informed how they perceived themselves. These arguments advance the main thesis, that the subjectivity of providence allowed individuals to adapt the idea and their exercise and to use it to make sense of the world and their place in it.

This introductory chapter has four sections which provide evidence of the chronology and narratives just discussed. Section 1.1. explains what providence is and why it played a significant role in the early modern period, up to the Restoration. Section 1.2. surveys the historiography of providence *c.*1660-*c.*1720, illustrating why an account of the lived experience of providentialism is a necessary contribution. Section 1.3. then explains what is meant by the ‘subjective experience of providentialism’, and provides definitions and details of the conceptual approach used in the thesis. Section 1.4. concludes this introductory chapter and details the structure of the thesis and what will be achieved in each of its chapters.

1.1. Providence and its Historical Background

This section will explain providence as an idea and how it came to feature in post-Reformation English culture. It will also explain why by *c.*1660 providence was simultaneously a universally accepted explanatory framework and a potential site of conflict and division. In essence, it provides the historical background and definitions of providence up to the point studied in this thesis, and is important because the

position of providence after the Restoration is incomprehensible without an appreciation of the role of providence in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England.

Providence is an expansive, opaque idea that the universe was created and is continually directed by an external force or being. Within this idea the process of external direction is unknowable and often supernatural (whereby the creator operates outside the power of nature they had created), meaning that providence can be an ambiguous and mysterious force in the lives of those who hold to it.¹ As an explanatory idea it is also capacious, able to explain anything from the movements of the planets to the minutiae of everyday life. Those subscribing to this idea therefore become actors playing on a cosmic stage, their lives viewed in the context of this immanent world and another transcendental realm, and events appear *sub specie aeternitatis*.²

In the early modern period this expansive idea took form as a dual structure of general and special providence. It was believed that God operated through a universal, general providence, and that nature obeyed his eternal command by following the directions he set in motion in the act of creation. Special or particular providence, on the other hand, was God directly intervening in the course of events through either supernatural or preternatural means (the latter meaning something that was out-of-step with nature's regularity, but not outside it altogether). This dual structure reflected the belief in a God that was omnipotent and omnipresent, distant and yet close. His providences were to be observed, accounted, and remembered by those who sought to serve him and be saved. Gratitude for exemplary signal providences was the exercise of a good Christian. As an idea, a belief, an exercise, and indeed as something capable

¹ Jacob Viner, *The Role of Providence in the Social Order* (Philadelphia, 1972), 4.

² Richard Harvey, 'English Poverty and God's Providence, 1675-1725', *Historian*, 41, 3 (1979), 499.

of provoking intense feeling, providence therefore played a significant role in early modern lives.³

Providence was not an early modern idea, however. As Keith Thomas remarked, it is tied to an ancient belief that there is ‘an intimate relationship between man’s moral behaviour and the apparent caprices of his environment’.⁴ Providence has therefore overlapped with concepts such as fate, fortune, freedom and design, and as such it belongs to the long history of Western thought and to the ‘configuration of concepts’ that created the ‘modern will’.⁵ An important development in this history of providential ideas arrived in the work of Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who dismissed chance and instead posited a purposeful, predetermined governance of the world by an omnipotent, indivisible and omniscient God of Christianity.⁶ Divine providence was the tool through which this governance was achieved, and how Augustine explained the problem of evil.⁷ Providence insured the “‘right” ordering of evils by a divine will’.⁸

Augustine’s configuration of providence was responsible for continuity in providential ideas from the medieval to the early modern periods, because the idea

³ For discussion of definitions see John T. McNeill (ed.), *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (London, 1961), i, 198-208; Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge, 2007), 5-6; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971; 1991), 90-103; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 12; Blair Worden, ‘Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England’, *P&P*, 109 (1985), 71.

⁴ Thomas, *Religion*, 106. See also Patrick Collinson, ‘The English Reformation, 1545-1565’, in M. Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), 346.

⁵ Genevieve Lloyd, *Providence Lost* (London, 2008), 1, 6-7, 152.

⁶ Josh Reeves, ‘The Secularization of Chance: Toward Understanding the Impact of the Probability Revolution on Christian Belief in Divine Providence’, *Zygon*, 50, 3 (2015), 606-8.

⁷ Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (London, 1999), quoted in Darren Oldridge, ‘Light from Darkness: The Problem of Evil in Early Modern England’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 27, 4 (2012), 389. See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided 1490-1700* (London, 2003), 109.

⁸ Lloyd, *Providence*, 8-9, see also 131-50; Oldridge, ‘Light’, 390. See also Reeves, ‘Secularization’, 606-8; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Mystery of Continuity: Time and History, Memory and Eternity in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Charlottesville, VA, 1986); Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Divine Providence: A History: The Bible, Virgil, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante* (London, 2012), chapter 3.

powerful enough to challenge the strength of the medieval church was in fact a newly invigorated statement of his soteriology and theodicy.⁹ With this statement came a renewed emphasis on God's omnipotence and his divine providence, meaning that the Reformation in the sixteenth century changed the role of providence in English lives. This change is why providence features in studies such as Thomas's 'horizonless' vision of the early modern mental landscape.¹⁰ While we might consider the Reformation in England as having been slow and with many unintended consequences, we can see providence nevertheless featuring in the 'gradual modification' of traditional piety in the late sixteenth century and forming part of the 'patchwork of beliefs' that while not 'thoroughly Protestant ... was distinctively post-Reformation'.¹¹ Providence was thus part of the new English Protestantism that after two or three generations had 'progressively cemented its hold on English society', helped by a Protestant political calendar and a popular culture informed by providentialism.¹²

Reformed orthodoxy emphasised God's omnipotence, absolute majesty and grace, and the stance of Martin Luther and Swiss reformers, that God was ultimately responsible for all earthly events, became 'bound up in the concept of 'providence'. This approach influenced the position taken by the new Church of England.¹³ The need to emphasise God's unremitting governance grew out of the space vacated by the traditional intermediary figures between the individual and the Almighty, such as the

⁹ MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 110-11.

¹⁰ Quote is Collinson's description of Thomas's 1971 work, Collinson, 'English Reformation', 346.

¹¹ Walsham, *Providence*, 2-3; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989), 7; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), 327.

¹² Cressy, *Bonfires*; Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie, 'Introduction', in *idem.*, (eds.), *The Beginning of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002), 2-3; see also Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), 1-18.

¹³ Oldridge, 'Light', 390; MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 110-11.

saints and the Virgin Mary.¹⁴ Instead, Protestant teaching decried belief in any earthly delegation of divine power, directing focus to the awe-inspiring nature of God and his divine providence. It was the individual's dependence on 'simple faith and trust hoping for mercy' that could keep them from harm against the misfortunes and dangers of an unforgiving world.¹⁵

John Calvin's doctrine of divine providence stood upon the premise that the universe was established 'especially for the sake of mankind'.¹⁶ For Calvin, God was a thoroughly interfering creator and it was the Christian's duty to recognise the care he bestowed on humanity in his special and general providences. Recognition of providence, however, was not to become the 'sheer folly' of searching for God's hand in events in order to know his intentions. Strictly speaking, for Calvin, faith and scripture alone were sources of special revelation, not divination of earthly signs.¹⁷

Neither reformed nor Calvinist doctrine of divine providence was adhered to with uniformity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and providential interpretation became a site of 'ideological separation'.¹⁸ Those who thought that the

¹⁴ Euan Cameron, 'For Reasoned Faith or Embattled Creed? Religion for the People in Early Modern Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 8 (1998), 186-7.

¹⁵ Steven Ozment, *Protestants, The Birth of a Revolution* (New York, 1991), 194; Oldridge, 'Light', 390.

¹⁶ John Calvin, *A Defense of the Secret Providence of God* (1558); McNeill, *Institutes*, i, 197, 207; Oldridge, 'Light', 391.

¹⁷ McNeill, *Institutes*, 212; Ronald J. VanderMolen, 'Providence as Mystery, Providence as Revelation: Puritan and Anglican Modifications of John Calvin's Doctrine of Providence', *Church History*, 47,1 (1978), 30-31. For further discussion of Calvin's approach to providence see P. H. Reardon, 'Calvin on Providence: The Development of an Insight', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (1975), 517-533; T. J. Gorringer, *God's Theatre: A Theology of Providence* (London, 1991); Walsham, *Providence*, 8-15; Sung-Sup Kim, *Deus Providebit: Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth on the Providence of God* (Minneapolis, MN, 2014); Horton Davies, *The Vigilant God: Providence in the Thought of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Barth* (New York, 1992); Reeves, 'Secularization', 611-13; Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD, 1996), 10-15.

¹⁸ VanderMolen, 'Providence', 27-47, 28, 33. See his analysis of Thomas Beard's *Theatre of Gods Judgments* (1597; 1612) as a means of illustrating the divergence over providential interpretation. On Beard see also Walsham, *Providence*, 66-75; Thomas, *Religion*, 109; Worden, 'Providence', 86; Winship, *Seers*, 30.

‘Reformation had not gone far enough’ were pursuing experimental Calvinism and became known pejoratively as ‘puritans’.¹⁹ To be clear, the use of ‘puritans’ here is aligned with the definition offered by John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, that although ‘imprecise’ the term is a ‘convenient shorthand’ for those pursuing ‘a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism’ originating in specific conditions within the Church of England, and who ‘spill[ed] out beyond it, branching off into divergent dissenting streams’.²⁰ Puritan religiosity grew out of subscription to John Calvin’s doctrines, including the doctrine of divine providence, though on this point many practiced a more divinatory style of providential interpretation than Calvin had stipulated. For the godly, the practice of this experimental providentialism involved intensive examination not only of one’s self but also for the signs of God’s presence through mercies and judgements.²¹ This highly individualised providential interpretation can be described as ‘personal providentialism’.²² Reading the special providences in one’s life was a ‘sort of Morse code or semaphore between the soul and its Saviour’ that ‘saints’ had to be versed in.²³

It was due to the intensity of their practice that puritans have been associated more than any other group with providentialism in the early modern period.²⁴ In her 1999

¹⁹ Marshall and Ryrie, ‘Introduction’, 3; Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge, 2011), 10.

²⁰ John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, ‘Introduction’, in *idem.*, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008), 1-2 and see also Peter Lake, ‘The Historiography of Puritanism’, 346-71; Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 10-16; Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640* (Stanford, CA, 2011); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought From Whitgift to Hooker* (New Haven, CT, 2002); Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge, 1996); C. Durston and J. Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996).

²¹ See further discussion of self-examination in chapter 2.

²² Guyatt, *Providence*, 5-6.

²³ Walsham, *Providence*, 15.

²⁴ See also Barbara Donegan, ‘Providence, Chance and Explanation: Some Paradoxical Aspects of Puritan Views of Causation’, *Journal of Religious History*, 11 (1981), 385-403; Barbara Donegan, ‘Godly Choice: Puritan Decision-Making in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 76 (1983), 307-34; Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, CA, 1985); Winship, *Seers*, 9-29; David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England* (New York, 1989), ch. 2.

study Alexandra Walsham problematizes that association, and studies providence to learn more about the impact and character of the English Reformation.²⁵ She identifies continuities in providential ideas and argues that providence, synthesised with other ideas and beliefs, played a critical role in how Protestantism ‘gradually implanted itself in the hearts and minds of the Elizabethan and early Stuart populace’.²⁶ Of Walsham’s findings one is particularly important for this study: she asserts that providence was a ubiquitous feature of post-Reformation English culture, but shows it to have been neither homogeneous nor the domain of one group, thus dispelling any exclusive link between puritanism and providentialism. Adopting Patrick Collinson’s formulation that puritans were a ‘hotter sort of Protestant’, she argues that there was a ‘hotter sort’ of providentialist.²⁷ Chiming with Alec Ryrie’s argument that Protestantism was ‘a *broad-based* religious culture’, Walsham’s argument allows for a spectrum of providential practice which could accommodate the ‘Puritan’s intensity of belief’, with their ‘free-standing puritan view of the world’, within a picture of a ubiquitous providential culture.²⁸

Appreciating the heterogeneity of providential ideas and practice within English culture is essential for understanding the period 1620-60, a period which saw providential interpretation and expression reach its full ‘protean political potential’ during the English Civil War and the Interregnum.²⁹ These years saw fragmentation

²⁵ Walsham, *Providence*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-5, 328. See also Lake’s point about the synthesis of ideas and beliefs with providence, Peter Lake, ‘Deeds Against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Modern England’, in Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (London, 2002), 36.

²⁷ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967), quoted in Walsham, *Providence*, 2.

²⁸ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 6, 8; Lake with Questier, *Antichrist’s*, 317-18; Winship, *Seers*, 1-2, 30. See also Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), 437-38; Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*.

²⁹ Lake with Questier, *Antichrist’s*, 317; Worden, ‘Providence’, 59. See also Winship, *Seers*, 29-53, esp. 31-32; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987).

among puritans and by the 1650s a ‘substantial minority’ were meeting in ‘gathered churches’ outside the national church.³⁰ In this fragmented situation all parties claimed guidance from divine providence, from ‘God’s arm stretch[ing] out in their favor’.³¹ This application of providence occurred on both sides of the civil conflict, because while the parties may have worked from differing ‘theological premise[s]’ they shared ‘instinctive and profound assumption[s]’ about God’s presence in the world.³² Increasingly, however, Royalists developed a scepticism towards the ‘untrammelled application of providentialism in the political sphere’, a division that would have a lasting effect on Anglican attitudes toward providence.³³

It was the heated contestation over the providential meaning of events and the ‘engulfment of providence in factional strife and sectarian struggle’ in these middle decades of the seventeenth century that ultimately contributed to the ‘undermining of its credibility’.³⁴ The political and ideological providential discourse which had before 1620 been the source of an ‘inspiring myth of elect English nationhood’ was now associated with instability and the partisanship of radical groups. The result, according to Walsham, was that by c.1660 ‘providentialism began very gradually to retreat to the edges of the intellectual mainstream’.³⁵

³⁰ Oldridge, ‘Light’, 391; Coffey and Lim, ‘Introduction’, 5-6.

³¹ Winship, *Seers*, 2-3.

³² Worden, ‘Providence’, 57-8, 87-88. See also Lucy-Ann Bates ‘Nationwide Fast and Thanksgiving Days in England, 1640-1660’ (Durham Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 2012); C. Durston, ‘Signs, Wonders and the English Civil War’, *History Today*, 37, 10 (1987), 22-28; David Randall, ‘Providence, Fortune, and the Experience of Combat: English Printed Battlefield Reports, circa 1570-1637’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35 (2004), 1053-77; Blair Worden, ‘Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan’, in Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best (eds.), *History, Society, and the Churches* (Cambridge, 1985), 125-45. Set into a more general context see Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002); David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution* (Oxford, 2006); John Morrill, *The Nature of The English Revolution* (London, 1993). See also David Frederic Greder, ‘Providence and the 1641 Irish Rebellion’ (Univ. of Iowa Ph.D. thesis, 2015).

³³ G. C. Browell, ‘The Politics of Providentialism in England’ (Univ. of Kent Ph.D. thesis, 2000), 269, 273, and 33-94; 95-262; Michael Finlayson, ‘Providence and the Historical Revolution’, *Albion*, 22, 4 (1990), 607-32, at 621.

³⁴ Walsham, *Providence*, 333.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

This section has demonstrated that the period from the later sixteenth century to the Restoration saw the establishment of a wide-reaching, varied culture of providentialism in England, in which the discernment of providence by individuals played a vital part. By 1660, however, the intense, divisive interpretation of providence for political and radical purposes meant that providentialism had been cast in a new light and its position in English culture changed, in ways explored below.

1.2. Providence in England *c.*1660 – *c.*1720

Having provided an account of the role of providence in English culture up to *c.*1660 this section will now map out the context and historiography of providence in the period studied in this thesis. This survey will highlight the need for an account of the lived experience of providentialism *c.*1660-*c.*1720. The section will gather and review scholarship into two areas. The first includes the scholarship that highlights this period as one of transition, as one that saw the reconfiguration or decline of providence following the mid-century conflict. The second includes scholarship that looks at the role of providence in various facets of English culture, in politics, in approaches to the environment, and in economic and social attitudes. Both areas give a comprehensive account of providence in the period, but leave under-explored the lived, subjective, individual experiences of providentialism, a deficit this thesis seeks to address.

The period *c.*1660-*c.*1720 witnessed a change in the intellectual and ideological context of providentialism. The political and religious crisis of the mid-century irrevocably altered how providential interpretation could be applied, and how people responded to that application. It should be acknowledged at this point that in many areas of English culture providence was eventually displaced by other ideologies in

the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The chronology implied in this narrative of declining providential belief places the beginning of that process in the Restoration period.³⁶ The period studied in this thesis can be fairly described, therefore, as one of transition.

The Restoration is cited as the beginning of the decline of providential belief because attitudes towards zealous Protestantism and fanaticism changed, and providence had become associated with that zeal and fanaticism. The change in attitudes is signified by the shifting (or shifted) position of puritanism in English society. In 1662 mainstream puritans and those in gathered churches were ‘swept together’ into the legal category of ‘dissent’, and hundreds of clergymen were ejected from their livings, legally, politically and intellectually marginalized for their recent ‘excesses’.³⁷ A shift away from the ‘zeal’ of the ‘old guard’ within puritan circles also identified the period as the ‘twilight of puritanism’, and the dawn of eighteenth-century evangelicalism and Dissent’.³⁸ Because puritans practiced a more intense

³⁶ Justin Champion, ‘Providence in Early Modern England’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 37, 2 (2002), 352-3.

³⁷ John Spurr, ‘Later Stuart Puritanism’, in Coffey and Lim (eds.), *Cambridge Companion*, 90, 89-106; Winship, *Seers*, 3.

³⁸ Spurr, ‘Later Stuart Puritanism’, 89. See discussion of Cotton Mather’s later years, Winship, *Seers*, ch. 8. See also Gordon Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, 1966), cited in Blair Worden, ‘The Question of Secularization’, in Alan Houston and Steve Pincus (eds.), *A Nation Transformed: England After the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), 24; David Harley, ‘Spiritual Phisic, Providence and English Medicine, 1560-1640’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London, 1993), 112; John Spurr, ‘From Puritanism to Dissent, 1660-1700’, in Durston and Eales (eds.), *English Puritanism*, 234-65, at 264; B. R. White, ‘The Twilight of Puritanism in the Years Before and After 1688’, and Nicholas Tyacke, ‘The ‘Rise of Puritanism’ and the Legalizing of Dissent 1571-1719’, in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), 307-8, 17-49; N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Non-Conformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens, GA., 1987); Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study in the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1991), i; M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1978, 1995, 2015); C. E. Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688* (London, 1931); G. R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1957); Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA, 2002); Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1740* (Cambridge, 1995); John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (Basingstoke, 1998); Martin Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Late Stuart Dissent* (Carlisle, 2003); G. Holmes, *Politics, Religion and Society in England, 1678-1742* (London, 1986).

variety of providentialism this might also be seen as its ‘twilight’ period. Such an argument should not be exaggerated, however, because puritans did not have a monopoly over providentialism, later evangelical piety incorporated providentialism, and many late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglican clergy continued to hold and preach providential beliefs.³⁹

Accompanying this shifting position of puritanism was a rejection of ‘enthusiasm’, a pejorative term emerging in the late 1650s referring to the ‘fury of the millennial sects’.⁴⁰ With this rejection of enthusiasm came a move by many towards theological conformity and moderation, an embracing by England’s intellectual mainstream of ‘right and reasonable’ religion.⁴¹ Rejection of ‘enthusiasm’ is important for understanding the role of providence after the Restoration because the ‘interpretative excesses’ by millennial sects were now deemed as the epitome of

³⁹ See chapter 4. See also D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005); John Coffey (ed.), *Heart Religion: Evangelical Piety in England and Ireland, 1690-1850* (Oxford, 2016); John Seed, *Dissenting Histories: Religious Division and the Politics of Memory in Eighteenth-Century England* (Edinburgh, 2008); John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, ‘Introduction’, in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England, c.1689 – c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), 14, 17; ‘Introduction’, and Jeremy Gregory, ‘The Making of a Protestant Nation: “Success” and “Failure” in England’s Long Reformation’, in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England’s Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), 1-33, 307-335.

⁴⁰ J. Goldstein, ‘Eighteenth Century Smear Words in Comparative National Context’, in L. E. Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa (eds.), *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (Huntingdon Library, CA, 1998), 37-8 and J. G. A. Pocock ‘Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment’, 9-10, and Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Sociability, Solitude, and Enthusiasm’, 157; Fiona Godlee, ‘Aspects of Non-Conformity: Quakers and the Lunatic Fringe’, in W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd (eds.), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, 2 vols. (London, 1985), ii, 79-80.

⁴¹ Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind* (London, 2001), 77-78; Browell, ‘Politics’, 263; Winship, *Seers*, 33-35; Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam, Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), 170-2; Michael Heyd, “Be Sober and Reasonable”: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995); Umphrey Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds to Early Methodist Enthusiasm* (New York, 1931); Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (New York, 1950); Susie I. Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change* (Cambridge, 1972). See heightened invective of enthusiasm during French Prophets controversy c.1706. Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtle Effluvium: A Study of the Opposition to the French prophets in England, 1706-1710* (Gainesville, FL, 1978), *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA, 1980); Clarke Garrett, *Origins of the Shakers: from the Old World to the New World* (Baltimore, MD, 1998); Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (London, 2006), 149-158.

religious enthusiasm.⁴² For many amongst England's intellectual, social and ecclesiastical elite, intensive 'experimental providentialism' was out. But as Michael Winship has explained, instead of abandoning providence altogether learned Anglican figures reconfigured providence.⁴³ Clergymen such as John Tillotson (1630-1694), later Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Sprat (1635-1713), F. R. S. and later Bishop of Rochester, reconfigured Anglican theology away from Calvinist predestinarianism and from providential divination, particularly away from special providence.⁴⁴ By implication this would have included divination of God's direct workings in individual lives, and thus included personal providentialism.⁴⁵ By the 1690s Winship suggests their project had been successful.⁴⁶

The reconfigured providence was quite removed from its earlier iteration. It still advanced providence as the 'manifestation of God's will', but argued that it was best observed in the regular operations of nature.⁴⁷ In other words, it was a refining of providence to mean general providence, which has been taken as an indication of not

⁴² Browell, 'Politics', 263.

⁴³ Winship, *Seers*, ch. 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁵ See Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* (1665), 360, quoted in Winship, *Seers*, 38, 46-7.

⁴⁶ Considering these figures had risen from being marginal 'time-servers' or 'latitudinarians' to the highest positions within the national church this is a fair assessment. Winship, *Seers*, 44-50; John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation 1603-1714* (Harlow, 2006), 147, 203-5. On Tillotson see Irène Simon, *Three Restoration Divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967-76); T. Birch, *The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Compiled Chiefly from His Original Papers and Letters*, 2nd edn (1753); R. Barker (ed.), *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, 12 vols. (1742-4); Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology, 1640-1790* (Oxford, 1990). On Tillotson's influence, Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Hassocks, 1976), 22-72; John Spurr, 'Latitudinarianism and the Restoration Church', *HJ*, 31 (1988), 61-82; I. Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (1991), chapter 2; on clerical reform Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s* (Oxford, 1999), 186-87, and in general, 152-195; J. Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation and Reform, 1660-1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and Their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000), W. M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (Athens, GA, 1993); Robert L. Emerson, 'Latitudinarianism and the English Deists', in J. A. Leo Lemay (ed.), *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment* (Newark, 1987), 19-48; Robert Todd Carroll, *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, 1635-1699* (The Hague, 1975); Mark Goldie, 'John Locke, Jonas Proast and Religious Toleration 1688-1692', and Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism At the Parting of Ways: A Suggestion', in Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor (eds.), *Church of England*, 143-172, 209-228.

⁴⁷ Winship, *Seers*, 48, 44; Heyd, *Be Sober*, 158.

just a change in providential ideas and beliefs, but their decline; providence was made compatible with the rational, empirical worldview of fashionable scientific thinking.⁴⁸ According to Thomas, later iterations of providentialism were ‘the survival of earlier assumptions, no longer fully compatible with the scientific principles of the day, and no longer accepted by many of the clergy themselves’.⁴⁹ Special providence or direct divine intervention was particularly unfashionable, and ‘when the devil was banished to Hell, God himself was confined to working through natural causes’, through general providence.⁵⁰

The transition in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from personal providentialism and special providence to a general providence that operated through natural second causes has been linked to declining providential and supernatural belief, beliefs in eternal torment and in the ‘spirit kingdom’.⁵¹ For Roy Porter, this all constituted a sea change in the cosmological reality of English society.⁵² For Thomas, the derision of special providence in favour of general providence, informed by natural theology, was ‘a final break in the association between guilt and misfortune which had been integral to so many ... primitive beliefs’.⁵³

These arguments for the ‘decay of transcendentalism’ and decline can be set into the broader historiography of the disenchantment and secularization theses.⁵⁴ The

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Religion*, 127.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 765.

⁵¹ John Spurr, ‘“Virtue, Religion and Government”: The Anglican Uses of Providence’, in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), 31; Guyatt, *Providence*, 5-6; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), 128, 229, *Mind Forg’d Manacles* (London, 1987), 72-73, 79; D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell* (London, 1964), 4, 262; Thomas, *Religion*, 765.

⁵² Porter, *Manacles*, 79.

⁵³ Thomas, *Religion*, 765-6.

⁵⁴ Porter, *Manacles*, 72-73. Walsham detected the disenchantment ‘paradigm’ in Thomas’s *Religion*, see Alexandra Walsham, ‘The Reformation and ‘The Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed’, *HJ*, 51, 2 (2008), 498-99.

disenchantment thesis was posited by Max Weber in his 1904-5 examination of the historical progress of modern economic behaviour and organization.⁵⁵ Disenchantment, Weber argued, was the flip side of rationalization, and was the process by which the world was divested of its mysterious or magical quality. The source of this demystification lay in the rejection of superstition and magic by Protestant reformers, which thus tied the Reformation to the birth of the modern, rational, secular worldview.⁵⁶ Weber's thesis was then developed by Heidelberg theologian Ernst Troeltsch, and the teleological narrative of the Reformation and modernization was established as a paradigm towering over twentieth-century historical thought.⁵⁷

The twin-stranded rationalization-disenchantment process in religion was also rooted in the idea that a modern society was a secular one, and though the term appeared only rarely in his piece 'secularization' became a theory associated with Weber's work. The reason that the secularization thesis is important historiographical context for this study is because this 'interpretative superstructure' has demanded the period c.1660-c.1832 as its 'central territory'.⁵⁸ Providence was ingrained with mystery and was thus part of the mental landscape that the theory claimed was eroded by secularizing forces. While 'secularization' continues to be used as a shorthand term for how religion was divorced from aspects of society or culture, it has been widely

⁵⁵ Weber borrowed the phrase 'disenchantment of the world' (Entzauberung) from Friedrich Schiller, 'the arch-romantic' who used it to describe the regret for 'the barren rationalism of the modern world', and who saw it 'as a woeful state of aesthetic affairs'. H. C. Greisman, "'Disenchantment of the World": Romanticism, Aesthetics and Sociological Theory', *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976), 495-507, at 495-7.

⁵⁶ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London, 1930); William H. Swatos Jr. and Kevin J. Christiano, 'Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept', *Sociology of Religion*, 60, 3 (1999), 212; Walsham, 'Disenchantment', 498.

⁵⁷ Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism For the Rise of the Modern World*, ed. B. A. Gerrish (Philadelphia, PA, 1986, first publ. 1912), cited in Walsham, 'Disenchantment', 498.

⁵⁸ J. C. D. Clark, 'Secularization and Modernization: The Failure of a 'Grand Narrative'', *HJ*, 55 (2012), 184.

criticised by historians as a restrictive, imprecise idea.⁵⁹ Due to its association with the Weberian paradigm and ‘Whiggish’ thinking it has not enjoyed popularity for some time, particularly since the 1980s.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, ‘secularization’ will continue to exist in the web of concepts employed to understand English history.⁶¹ Theories of secularization have also been revised considerably over the past sixty years, particularly as scholars have discussed ‘modernity’s enchantment’ and the ‘desecularization of the world’.⁶² Of those sociological revisions, David Martin’s idea of ‘successive Christianizations followed or accompanied by recoils’ has ‘let history, culture, different theologies and ecclesial structures back into the subject’.⁶³ This idea of recoils and resurgence encourages us to view the changing role of religion in a pluralistic, non-linear light, and is therefore helpful for understanding peaks and

⁵⁹ Described as a ‘large and treacherous word’, ‘infested with the doctrinaire’, ‘inapplicable to the British experience in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and unhelpful’, a ‘straitjacket’, and reliant on ‘ clichéd historical assumptions’. Worden, ‘Question of Secularization’, 20; Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), 2, 264; Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (2001; London, 2009), 30-4, quoted in Jeremy Morris, ‘Secularization and Religious Experience: Arguments in the Historiography of Modern British Religion’, *HJ*, 55 (2012), 208-9; Clark, ‘Secularization’, 164-5.

⁶⁰ See discussion in Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (London, 2017), 4.

⁶¹ See C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England, From Religious culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992), critiqued in Worden, ‘Question of Secularization’, 22-3. On debate over secularization in 18th-20th centuries, see E. R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London, 1957); S. S. Acquaviva, *The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society*, trans. Patricia Lipscomb (Oxford, 1979); S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c.1920-1960* (Cambridge, 2011); Callum G. Brown, ‘Did Urbanization Secularize Britain’, *Urban History Yearbook* (1998), 1-11.

⁶² For an overview see Swatos Jr. and Christiano, ‘Secularization’, 209-228. For secularization theory at its ‘dogmatic height’ in the sociology of religion in the early 1970s, see Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (1967; Harmondsworth, 1973); Bryan R. Wilson, ‘Aspects of Secularization in the West’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 3, 4 (1976), 259-276, and then Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: A Multi-Dimensional Concept* (London, 1981). A more recent advocate is Steve Bruce, *God is Dead* (Oxford, 2002). For revision see Peter Berger, Gracie Davie and Effie Fokas, *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations* (Farnham, 2008); Gracie Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (London, 2007); Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC, 1999), 65-85; Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, trans. Simon Lee (New Brunswick, NJ, 2000, first publ. in original translation 1993); Gordon Graham, ‘Religion, Secularization and Modernity’, *Philosophy*, 67 (1992). On ‘modernity’s enchantment’ see Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, at 4.

⁶³ David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, 2005), 3, and Charles Taylor, ‘Foreword’, ix. First published in *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford, 1978). Martin’s theory cited in Peter Marshall, ‘Disenchantment and Re-Enchantment in Europe, 1250-1920’, *HJ*, 54, 2 (2011), 599, and in Shaw, *Miracles*, 17-8.

troughs of religious zeal or crisis without hailing them as symptomatic of a ‘once-for-all unilateral process’ of secularization.⁶⁴

Indeed, revisionists have looked at continuities across periodization boundaries and at cycles of engagement, and have instead found that Protestantism yielded a ‘moralized universe’, and that a ‘super-enchantment’ of the world may be more accurate than ‘disenchantment’.⁶⁵ Scholars have explored ideas of a ‘Long Reformation’ and have argued for the ‘resilience and persistence of belief in magic and the supernatural after 1700’.⁶⁶ It has been suggested that rather than declining, belief in divine immanence and the supernatural may have instead recoiled, retreating into the private sphere.⁶⁷ Despite a lack of consensus about ‘the now conventional postulate that Protestantism was as “enchanted” and devil-ridden as its medieval predecessors’, there has nevertheless been a flourishing of scholarship investigating supernatural and magical beliefs in this period. Beliefs in witchcraft, ghosts, angels, prophecy, astrology, prodigies, and miracles have been investigated with new interpretative approaches.⁶⁸ The result has been the problematization of the narrative

⁶⁴ Martin, *On Secularization*, 3. See also Worden, ‘Question of Secularization’, 23.

⁶⁵ Robert W. Scribner, ‘The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World”’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23, 3 (1993), 482-83, 485, 492; Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), 11.

⁶⁶ Walsham, ‘Disenchantment’, 501, where she refers esp. to Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736-1951* (Manchester, 1999); Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt (eds.), *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester, 2004), and their *Witchcraft Continued: Popular Magic in Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2004); Jonathan Barry, ‘Piety and the Patient: Medicine and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Bristol’, in Roy Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society* (Cambridge, 1985), 145-75.

⁶⁷ Worden, ‘Question of Secularization’, and Michael Hunter, ‘Magic, Science and Reputation: Robert Boyle, the Royal Society and the Occult in the Late Seventeenth Century’, in *idem.*, *Robert Boyle (1627-91): Scrupulosity and Science* (Woodbridge, 2000), 14, ch. 10, cited in Walsham, ‘Disenchantment’, 521.

⁶⁸ Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford, 2010), 23, quoted in Marshall, ‘Disenchantment’, 600. On witchcraft see Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2010); Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd edn. (London, 2006); Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of Witchcraft* (London, 1995); Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT 2004); Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), 145-83; and on decline of witchcraft see Michael Hunter, ‘Witchcraft and the Decline of Belief’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 22 (1998), 144; Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its*

of decline and the ‘linear path of development’ that the Weberian paradigm had established, and a more varied and detailed picture of these ethereal facets of early modern mentalities has emerged.⁶⁹

The context of providence in the period c.1660-c.1720 can now be understood as one where supernatural and preternatural beliefs were current, though constantly challenged and contested by those same intellectual and ecclesial elites who hoped to reconfigure providentialism. A good example of that contextualisation is provided by Jane Shaw’s examination of miracles in Enlightenment England because, like special providence, miracles denoted the direct intervention of an interfering deity. Shaw’s findings indicate an ‘earlier, distinctive English Enlightenment’ that had a markedly religious character, and an increase in miracle claims and beliefs in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁷⁰ By focussing on ‘lived religion’, Shaw demonstrates how

Transformations, c. 1650 – c.1750 (Oxford, 1997). On ghost beliefs see Sasha Handley, *Visions of an Unseen World: Ghost Beliefs and Ghost Stories in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2007); Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking About Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920* (Cambridge, 2010); Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002), esp. ch. 6; Darren Oldridge, *The Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 2016), ch. 6. On angels see Joad Raymond, *Milton’s Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford, 2010); Laura Sangha, *Angels and Belief in England, 1480-1700* (London, 2012); Alexandra Walsham and Peter Marshall (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2006). On prophecy and visions see Howard Dobin, *Merlin’s Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry and Power in Renaissance England* (Stanford, CA, 1990); Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA, 1994). On astrology see ch. 5 of this thesis. On prodigies see, William E. Burns, *An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, Politics and Providence in England 1657-1727* (Manchester, 2002); A. W. Bates, *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2005); Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London, 1993). On miracles see Shaw, *Miracles*; R. M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles: From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume* (Lewisburg, PA, 1981); J. C. D. Clark, ‘Providence, Predestination and Progress: Or, Did the Enlightenment Fail?’, *Albion*, 35, 4 (2003), 571-76; Alexandra Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England’, *HJ*, 46 (2003), 779-815.

⁶⁹ Walsham, ‘Disenchantment’, 504.

⁷⁰ Shaw, *Miracles*, 16. See also Porter, *Enlightenment*; J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1999); B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998); Peter Harrison, ‘Religion’ and the Religions in the English Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1990); J. A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992). On the religious character of the Enlightenment, and in eighteenth-century society, Norman Sykes, *From Sheldon to Secker: Aspects of English Church History 1660-1768* (Cambridge, 1959); Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor (eds.), *Church of England*; Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain (eds.), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800* (Woodbridge, 2003); Jane Shaw, ‘The Long Eighteenth Century’, in Ernest Nicholson (ed.), *A Century of Theological and Religious Studies in Britain* (Oxford, 2003), 215-36; Jonathan Sheehan, ‘Enlightenment, Religion, and the

this was a transitional period where there was continuity in miracle beliefs but also change in how miracles were ‘made anew’, reconceptualised in new scientific, Protestant, rational and political images.⁷¹ There is a similarity between what Shaw identifies in the debate about miracles and what Winship identifies in the debate about providence; both were adapted and reconfigured in a way that corresponded to intellectual and ideological changes. We should therefore see this period c.1660-c.1720 as one that witnessed a re-conceptualisation of divine immanence and intervention.⁷²

So far this section has identified why the period studied in this thesis can be seen as one of transition. Reacting to the intensive providential interpretation during the mid-century civil and religious conflict, attitudes towards providence changed. Because it was associated with an enthusiastic puritanism they wished to distance themselves from, Restoration intellectual and ecclesiastical figures reconfigured providence along new lines, refining it to mean a general providence to be observed through the workings of natural, mechanical, second causes. They denigrated the divination of special providences and by implication the exercise of personal providentialism, whereby individuals discerned God working directly in their lives. This section has illustrated that while providential belief did eventually decline, we should not take this reconfiguration to be indicative of a cessation of belief in

Enigma of Secularisation: A Review Essay’, *AHR*, 108, 4 (2003), 1061-80; Dror Wahrman, ‘God and the Enlightenment’, *AHR*, 108, 4 (2003), 1057-1060; Robert Sullivan, ‘Rethinking Christianity in Enlightened Europe’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34,2 (2001), 298-309.

⁷¹ Shaw, *Miracles*, 9-10, 18, 181. On Cartesianism and Newtonianism see John Henry, ‘Metaphysics and the Origins of Modern Science: Descartes and the Importance of Laws of Nature’, *Early Science and Medicine*, 9 (2004), 73-114; Stephen Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1210-1685* (Oxford, 2006); Peter Harrison, ‘Newtonian Science, Miracles, and the Laws of Nature’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995), 531-53; John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science* (Basingstoke, 1997); Michael Hunter, *Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy: Intellectual Change in Late Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge, 1995).

⁷² Clark, ‘Providence’, 559-589.

providence. In the context of persistent, if contested, supernatural beliefs we should see providence as a pervasive, lively feature of English culture that during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was constantly challenged and renegotiated.

The remainder of this section will survey more precisely the role of providence in certain areas of English culture: in political expression and thinking, attitudes towards the environment, and towards economics and the answering of social questions. The survey will highlight how we still need an account of the lived experience of providentialism in this period, one that gathers these subjects into one place to see how they coexisted in individual lives.

Providence had long featured in English politics and historiography. We know that during Elizabeth I's and James I's reigns the notions of 'providential survival' and 'providentially-ensured triumph' were woven into a lasting Protestant historiography that proved vital in the formation of a national religious identity and a 'national providentialism'.⁷³ It has been shown that the application of these political tools

⁷³ For definition of 'national providentialism' see Guyatt, *Providence*, 5-6; Clark, 'Providence', 581. See also David Cressy, 'Remembrancers of the Revolution: Histories and Historiographies of the 1640s', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 68 (2005), 257-68; Matthew Neufield, *The Civil Wars After 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013); Mark Stoye, 'Remembering the English Civil Wars', in Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (eds.), *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester, 2004); Blair Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil War and the Passions of Posterity* (London, 2002); Mark Benbow, 'The Providential Theory of Historical Causation in Holinshed's Chronicles: 1577 and 1587', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 1 (1955), 264-76; Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories* (Cambridge, MA, 1970); F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (London, 1962), ch. 7; D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (London, 1990), chapter 1; Cressy, *Bonfires*, xii; Thomas S. Freeman, 'Providence and Prescription: The Account of Elizabeth in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'', and Alexandra Walsham, "'A Very Deborah?'" The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch', in Susan Doran and Thomas Freeman (eds.), *The Myth of Elizabeth* (Basingstoke, 2003), 27-55, 143-168; Alexandra Walsham, 'History, Memory and the English Reformation', *HJ*, 55, 4 (2012), 899-938; N. Mears, 'Public Worship and Political Participation in Elizabethan England', *Journal of British Studies*, 51, 1 (2012), 4-25; Alasdair Raffe, 'Nature's Scourges: The Natural World and Special Prayers, Fasts and Thanksgivings, 1541-1866', in Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (eds.), *Gods Bounty? The Churches and the Natural World, Studies in Church History*, 46 (Woodbridge, 2010), 237-47; N. Mears, Alasdair Raffe, P. Williamson and S. Taylor (eds.), *National Prayers: Special Worship Since the Reformation, Volume I: Special Prayers, Fasts and Thanksgivings in the British Isles, 1533-1688* (Woodbridge, 2013).

continued in Restoration England, with Royalists lauding the Restoration as a special providence.⁷⁴ It has also been argued that the Restoration court needed adeptness in providential interpretation – the ‘politics of prophecy’ – if they were to counter the ‘danger of prophetic rhetoric’ sparked by events such as the Great Fire or the plague, or if they were to ‘negotiate the experience and memory’ of the mid-century crisis.⁷⁵ Though not identical to their former iterations, ‘modified understandings’ of providential and millennial ideas continued to be employed throughout the reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, and Anne.⁷⁶ In particular, it has been shown how providence featured in the Whigs’ strategy after the arrival of William III, whose invasion was dubbed as ‘favoured by God’.⁷⁷ These providential-political strategies were an effective deployment of ‘deliverance politics’, and were successful because providence was ‘an agreed concept’. This tells us that providence continued to be a ‘key political instrument for cultivating cultural authority’.⁷⁸ Indeed, it has been shown that national providentialism was an enduring and potent feature of English, British and American political rhetoric and identity into the nineteenth century, signified by the endurance of national fast-days and thanksgivings.⁷⁹ It has also been observed that

⁷⁴ Clark, ‘Providence’, 583. See also Worden’s discussion of the Restoration being seen as ‘brought about by the immediate hand of God’, in ‘Providence and Politics’, 74, n. 93.

⁷⁵ Margery A. Kingsley, *Transforming the Word: Prophecy, Poetry, and Politics in England 1650-1742* (London, 2001), 92-3; Harriet Lyons, ‘The Fisherton Monster: Science, Providence, and Politics in Early Restoration England’, *HJ*, 60, 2 (2017), 333-62, quote at 335.

⁷⁶ Warren Johnston, *Revelation Restored: The Apocalypse in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2011), 1-2, 19. See also John Coffey, ‘The Impact of Apocalypticism During the Puritan Revolutions’, *Perichoresis*, 4 (2006).

⁷⁷ Rose, *England*, 203-4; Jane Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence: The Assassination Plot, 1696* (Cambridge, 1980), 3; Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), 227.

⁷⁸ John Coffey, *Exodus and Liberation: Deliverance Politics from John Calvin to Martin Luther King Jr.* (Oxford, 2014), 3, 7, chs. 1-2. Coffey’s notion of ‘deliverance politics’ chimes with Naomi Pullin’s findings in her ‘Providence, Punishment and Identity Formation in the Late-Stuart Quaker Community, c.1650-1700’, *Seventeenth Century*, 31, 4 (2016), 471-494; Claydon, *William*, 32; Champion, ‘Providence’, 352-3. On public providences during the late 1680s and 1690s see Rose, *England*, 19-21, 24-5, 196-201.

⁷⁹ Coffey, *Exodus*, 3; John Coffey, ‘“Tremble Britannia!”: Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758-1807’, *EHR* (2012), 844-881; Guyatt, *Providence*; Clark, ‘Providence’, 559-589; Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and Empire, 1815-1914* (Harlow, 2008). On national fasts and thanksgivings see Mears, Raffe, *et al*, *National Prayers*; Raffe, ‘Nature’s Scourges’, 237-47; Philip

a national identity where religion played a central role, as it did for England and then Britain, ‘does not easily fit into the secularization thesis’.⁸⁰

The role of providence in English attitudes towards the environment saw notable change c.1660-c.1720, because these attitudes were interacting with shifting scientific understandings of that environment. It has been shown, for example, that the providential interpretation of prodigies changed considerably. Prodigies, meaning ‘strange and aberrant event[s], the occurrence of which appeared to be outside the usual order of nature’, were widely seen to be ‘divine messages’ at the beginning of the Restoration period.⁸¹ But by the mid-eighteenth century this belief was considered a ‘class and gender marker’, and ‘characteristic of superstitious, uneducated and unenlightened people’.⁸² This period saw weather become a site of theological, scientific and public debate, and it witnessed the end of the ‘meteoric tradition’ and the advent of meteorological study of quotidian weather.⁸³ Both moves signified a transition to the ‘inductive enquiry into natural and preternatural Creation’, and a theological preference for general providence.⁸⁴

The British weather was just one of many ‘vicissitudes of human existence’ that early modern people had to withstand.⁸⁵ Another was sickness. Widely interpreted in the seventeenth century as the ‘afflictive hand of God’, it is argued that this too changed by the eighteenth century, ‘in favour of a more benevolent view of the

Williamson, ‘National Days of Prayer: The Churches, The State and Public Worship in Britain 1899-1957’, *EHR*, 128, 531 (2013), 324-66; Mears, ‘Public Worship’, 4-25; 121-74.

⁸⁰ Matthew Grimley, ‘The Religion of Englishness: Puritanism, Providentialism, and “National Character”’, *Journal of British Studies*, 46, 4 (2007), 884-906, quote taken from 886.

⁸¹ Burns, *Wonders*, 1-2.

⁸² *Ibid.*; Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (London, 2007).

⁸³ See debates over 1703 ‘Great Storm’ and the 1716 aurora borealis (‘Lord Derwentwater’s lights’). Vladimir Janković, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather 1650-1820* (Manchester, 2000), 68-78; Golinski, *British Weather*, 48, ch. 2; Ralph Arnold, *Northern Lights: The Story of Lord Derwentwater* (London, 1959); Burns, *Wonders*, 160, 162-3.

⁸⁴ Janković, *Skies*, 13; Golinski, *British Weather*, 48, 50-1, 82.

⁸⁵ Clark, ‘Providence’, 561.

deity'.⁸⁶ Epidemics such as plague had been taken as collective and personal afflictions, and the 'afflicted political body' was scrutinised for how it had provoked providence.⁸⁷ It has been shown, however, that the introduction of plague policies and publication of bills of mortality encouraged optimism for an empirical understanding of plague, and for statistical analyses that allowed plague to be 'viewed objectively', rather than through the lens of providential judgement.⁸⁸

The increasing use of statistical and empirical analysis of the environment – in accidents and in illness – encouraged the growth of insurance and probabilistic thinking, which some have seen as 'silently challenging the belief in Providence'.⁸⁹ Such a trajectory fits in with other accounts of intellectual and ideological change, such as the 'taming of chance' and the emergence of modern probabilistic

⁸⁶ Harley, 'Spiritual Physic', 112. On providential interpretation of illness and medicine see, Andrew Wear, 'Puritan Perceptions of Illness in Seventeenth-Century England', and Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', in Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practitioners*, 55-99, 145-75; Andrew Wear, 'Religious Beliefs and Medicine in Early Modern England', in Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (eds.), *The Task of Healing: Medicine, Religion and Gender in England and the Netherlands, 1450-1800* (Rotterdam, 1996), 145-69; David Harley, 'The Theology of Affliction and the Experience of Sickness in the Godly Family, 1650-1714: The Henrys and the Newcomes', in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 273-92; Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, 'Partakers of Pain: Religious Meanings of Pain in Early Modern England', and Jenny Mayhew, 'Godly Beds of Pain: Pain in English Protestant Manuals (c. 1550-1650)', in Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Karl A. E. Enekel (eds.), *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of Physical Pain in Early Modern Culture*, Yearbooks for Early Modern Studies, vol. 12 (Leiden, 2008); Alexandra Walsham, 'In Sickness and in Health: Medicine and Inter-Confessional Relations in Post-Reformation England', in C. Dixon, Freist Dagmar, and Mark Greengrass (eds.), *Living with Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2009), 161-82; Hannah Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580-1720* (Oxford, 2012), 6-7.

⁸⁷ Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL, 2009), 45. See also Thomas, *Religion*, 98-103.

⁸⁸ Paul Slack, *Plague: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2012), 79-81, and *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1985); Patrick Wallis, 'Plagues, Morality and the Place of Medicine in Early Modern England', *EHR*, 121 (2006), 1-24; Andrew Wear, 'Fear, Anxiety and the Plague in Early Modern England: Religious and Medical Responses', in John R. Hinnells and Roy Porter (eds.), *Religion, Health, and Suffering* (London, 1999), 339-63; Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Plague on a Page: Lord Have Mercy Upon Us in Early Modern London', *Seventeenth Century*, 27, 3 (2012), 255-86, at 268. See also Erin Sullivan, 'Physical and Spiritual Illness: Narrative Appropriations of the Bills of Mortality', in Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman (eds.), *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England* (New York, 2011), 76-95.

⁸⁹ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), 297-98; Thomas, *Religion*, 779-82; Craig Spence, *Accidents and Violent Death in Early Modern London, 1650-1750* (Woodbridge, 2016), 211, 213.

empiricism.⁹⁰ However, there is a large body of scholarship that reminds us that the new philosophy and science underwriting such developments did not emerge separately from religion, and that despite growing fears of atheism they were ‘developing along parallel tracks, supporting rather than hindering one another much of the time’.⁹¹

From the role of providence in politics and in attitudes towards the environment, which demonstrated differing degrees of change and continuity, we turn to the role of providence in economic and social attitudes. This period has been traditionally cited as witnessing the change from a ‘moral economy’ to a ‘market economy’.⁹² This narrative has been recently revised, however, and it has been argued that cultural forces such as providential belief continued to inform moralistic economic behaviour, with providence acting as the enforcer of social justice and the arbiter of material

⁹⁰ Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, 1990), 3; Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling in Western Culture* (New York, 2005), 182, cited in Reeves, ‘Secularization’, 605; Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationships Between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law, and Literature* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).

⁹¹ Robin Briggs, ‘Embattled Faiths: Religion and Natural Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century’, in Euan Cameron (ed.), *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford, 1999), 171; Shaw, *Miracles*, 5; Clark, ‘Providence’, 573; Peter Harrison, ‘Miracles, Early Modern Science, and Rational Religion’, *Church History*, 75, 3 (2006), 493-510. On parallel developments see discussion of Joseph Glanvill, Shaw, *Miracles*, 77; Michael Hunter and David Wootton, ‘Introduction’, in *idem.*, (eds.), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (1992; Oxford, 2003), 11; Thomas Harmon Jobe, ‘The Devil in Restoration: The Glanvill-Webster Witchcraft Debate’, *Isis*, 72, 3 (1981), 342-356. On the relationship between religion, superstition and science, see Peter Harrison, ‘Religion, the Royal Society, the Rise of Science’, *Theology and Science*, 6, 3 (2008), 255-71; Michael Hunter, ‘The Royal Society and the Decline of Magic’, *Notes & Records of The Royal Society*, 65 (2011), 103-19; Stephen Gaukroger, ‘Science, Religion and Modernity’, *Critical Quarterly*, 47 (2004), 1-31; John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1991); Simon Schaffer, ‘Godly Men and Mechanical Philosophers: Souls of Spirits in Restoration Natural Philosophy’, *Science in Context*, 1 (1987), 55-85; David Kubrin, ‘Newton and the Cyclical Cosmos: Providence and the Mechanical Philosophy’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28 (1967), 325-46. On atheism see Hunter, ‘Aikenhead the Atheist’: The Context and Consequences of Articulate Irreligion in the Late Seventeenth Century; Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England* (Cambridge, 1981), ch. 5; G. E. Aylmer, ‘Unbelief in Seventeenth-Century England’, in Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978), 22-46.

⁹² See E. P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *P&P*, 50 (1971), 76-136, cited in Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012), 2-8.

success.⁹³ For much of the early modern period providence also informed how people understood the social order, their place in it, and their ability to ‘make shift’.⁹⁴ It has been argued that this continued to be the case, and that providence ‘proved useful’ in making poverty comprehensible in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁹⁵

Where we can see change in this period, however, is in the role of providence in the identification and prosecution of criminals. From the late sixteenth century, ‘cautionary tales’ had enforced the idea that providence would ensure wrong-doers would be found out and punished.⁹⁶ But it has been argued that by the end of the seventeenth century the role of providential ideology in English legal culture was changing, and in the following century we can discern ‘a new confidence that murderers would be exposed and apprehended, without explicit mention of divine agency’.⁹⁷ Providence was ‘displaced’ by other ideological and technological methods, such as medical innovations and the application of ‘rudimentary forensic scientific method’ in policing and prosecution.⁹⁸

This survey of the role of providence in areas of English culture has shown that providence was being reconfigured, tested and applied in diverse ways in the period studied in this thesis. Providence continued to hold a firm grip over English hearts and minds, but the context in which it did so was changing radically. In political debate and expression providence continued to be employed through millennial and prophetic

⁹³ Waddell, *God, Duty*, ch.1, esp. 53-64. See also Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relation in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998).

⁹⁴ Viner, *Providence*, 17, 87-91.

⁹⁵ Harvey, ‘Poverty’, 501-2.

⁹⁶ See Lake, ‘Deeds Against Nature’, 3-54; Walsham, *Providence*, 75-96.

⁹⁷ Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), 264.

⁹⁸ Malcolm Gaskill, ‘The Displacement of Providence: Policing and Prosecution in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England’, *Continuity and Change*, 11, 3 (1996), 342.

language and national providentialism, whereby a political and religious identity narrative could be constructed out of England's providential victories and survivals. Attitudes towards the environment saw more pronounced change, and a shift towards subscription to a naturalistic general providence corresponded with the new empirical methods emerging for measuring and ordering that environment. In economic and social attitudes the picture is more mixed, with providence continuing to inform moralistic economic behaviour but being displaced in law enforcement, again in favour of general providence and innovative technologies.

What we have is a picture of providence amidst changing attitudes to enthusiastic religion, magic and divine immanence, and of its shifting role in political, environmental, economic and social attitudes. We have a picture of the continuity and change in providentialism: a picture of transition. But we are missing how this change and continuity, reconfiguration and qualification, occurred at the level of lived, subjective experience. We have an account of certain types of providentialism declining and others persisting, but this needs to be seen in the context of individual lives, where it was exercised, felt and internalised. What is needed, therefore, is an examination of the subjective, lived, individual experience of providentialism for the period *c.*1660-*c.*1720.

1.3. The Subjective Experience of Providentialism

This introduction has so far demonstrated the importance of providence in early modern England, how it was instrumental in forming a distinctive Protestant culture, and how it played a vital role in many areas of early modern English life. The previous section illustrated how the period studied in this thesis was one of transition, where

that role was changing. What remains to be seen, and what is provided by this study, is an account of how that period of transition was experienced subjectively, by individuals who enacted their providential belief in their everyday lives. This section will explain what is meant by the ‘subjective experience of providentialism’, and why it is a valuable contribution to the historiography of providence. It will also explain the relationships between providence and subjectivity, and between providence and emotion.

The account of how providentialism was experienced presented in this study is an important contribution to the historiography of providence because it will recover what providence meant to those who believed in and practiced it. This is valuable because, as Alec Ryrie has observed, the lived experience of religion ‘is not a detail: it is what that religion actually means to those who profess it’.⁹⁹ Recovering subjective experience can therefore allow us to take what we know about providence and how it was changing, and see how those changes manifest in everyday life: what providence did, how it felt, how it was used and exercised, and how it informed individuals’ perceptions of each other and themselves.

There are three further, specific ways in which this account of the subjective experience of providentialism in this period of transition contributes to the historiography of providence. First, as we have seen, historians have shown special providence and personal providentialism as declining, while general providence and national providentialism persisted.¹⁰⁰ Personal providentialism most concerned individuals because it was how they interpreted the hand of God in their lives. It was the kind of divinatory practice that some senior Restoration Anglicans wanted to

⁹⁹ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Guyatt, *Providence*, 60, 5-6.

expunge from providence when they reconfigured the parameters of the concept.¹⁰¹ Such a change presented a radical alteration in how individuals exercised their belief in providence, and will have had a significant bearing on how they viewed themselves (as no longer the special creatures under the care of an interfering deity). Examining subjective experience can therefore recover how personal providentialism was exercised during this period.

Secondly, by focussing on this period of transition in its own right this thesis examines the subjective experience of providentialism without being preoccupied with its eventual decline. By describing this period as one of 'transition' the thesis highlights that this was one of change, but not of 'becoming'. There are studies that account for the decline of providentialism, as discussed above, but this thesis is focussed on the two or three generations where the experience of providence was changing under specific conditions. This kind of approach has been described by Walsham as writing history 'with the notion of 'progress' left out', and also chimes with Martin's theory of secularization which allows for recoils and resurgences of engagement with religious ideas, rather than the 'once-for-all' process of secularization.¹⁰²

Thirdly and finally, this thesis contributes an account that expands how providentialism is represented historiographically. This problem of representation will be addressed in two ways. It will provide case studies of individuals outside the stereotypical 'hotter sort' of providentialist in an attempt to expand the demographic consulted. The case studies in chapters 3-6 concern individuals whose lives might not at first glance be associated with providentialism: an excommunicated, irascible,

¹⁰¹ Winship, *Seers*, ch. 2, esp. 36-41.

¹⁰² Walsham, 'Disenchantment', 528.

elderly gentlewoman; a poor Anglican curate; a nonconformist astrologer, merchant and financier; and a middling sort wig-maker and drunkard. These case studies provide a small but broadly representative cross-section.¹⁰³ However, the overall representativeness of the source-base limits the study to individuals of the better and middling sorts. Writing a personal account required good literacy skills. Those who had the time, access and inclination for basic literacy were those children who were free of the regular or seasonal demands of husbandry or those for whom additional skills were a specific advantage. The representation of ‘countrymen’ and the rural middling sort is therefore limited or negligible.¹⁰⁴ Restrictions on education for girls and women further prejudices this picture, as their literacy depended on either domestic tutors or the efforts of literate family members.¹⁰⁵ Further discussion of the representativeness of these sources follows in chapter 2.

However, this source-base does allow the thesis to address the problem of representation in a different way: it allows it to recover subjective experience. This is important because as Walsham has suggested, those gentlemen ‘anxious to align themselves with the culture of reason’, who ‘overtly disparage[d] belief in the diabolical and prodigious’, actually ‘ponder[ed] and speculat[ed] about it seriously in the seclusion of their libraries, closets and the inner chambers of their minds’.¹⁰⁶ This implies that while certain providential beliefs may have gone out of fashion they might have actually just ‘retreated’ from the public domain into interiors, into private spheres both physical and psychological.¹⁰⁷ To reconstruct an accurate, representative picture

¹⁰³ See discussion of gender and occupation of self-writers in ch. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), 187-9.

¹⁰⁵ See also graph 7.2 on female illiteracy in London and East Anglia in D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), 145.

¹⁰⁶ Walsham, ‘Disenchantment’, 521; Worden, ‘Question of Secularization’, 21.

¹⁰⁷ Hunter suggests we should not underestimate the ‘schizophrenia’ of a ‘public and private persona’. Walsham, discussing Worden’s similar observation, writes of a change ‘in public fashion and taste’

of providentialism in this period it is necessary to follow providence into those interiors, into how providence was experienced subjectively at an individual level.

To reiterate, by exploring the experience of providentialism, c.1660-c.1720 this thesis makes a much-needed contribution to the historiography of providence. It will deepen our understanding of how providence was being exercised at an individual level, and addresses the role of providence in English lives during this period of transition. It will show that because providentialism was by its nature subjective it could be adapted in such a way that ensured its continuing appeal and usefulness into the eighteenth century.

This section will now look at why subjectivity is relevant to the history of providence, how we can define it and what the link is between subjectivity and selfhood. Following the discussion of subjectivity, the section will then conclude by discussing the conceptual approach taken in the thesis; it will explain why a sensitivity to the emotional resonances of providence is useful for the reconstruction of the experience of providentialism and how this approach will be applied. This introduction will then conclude in section 1.4., which explains the structure of the thesis.

Subjectivity is relevant to a study of providence because providential belief is by its nature ‘subjective and evanescent’, as is all religious experience. Indeed, the historiography of providence has shown that the subjectivity of providentialism is central to how we understand the role it played in early modern England.¹⁰⁸ Thomas wrote that ‘the very subjectivity of the belief gave it its power’, and that this ‘extraordinarily elastic’ belief could allow individuals and groups to shape

where special providence was marginalised, but that this does not equate to the cessation of belief. Hunter, ‘Magic, Science and Reputation’, 14, ch. 10, quoted in Walsham, ‘Disenchantment’, 521.

¹⁰⁸ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 10.

interpretations of how God was operating in their lives.¹⁰⁹ Put simply, Thomas implied that the subjectivity with which providence was exercised and experienced rendered it a powerful and captivating instrument.

Moreover, because providence was such a capacious explanatory framework it could accommodate such a variety of explanations as to create a ‘self-confirming character’ in the providentialist. Walsham also notes that the experimental providentialism practiced by the godly was ‘suspiciously self-confirming and potentially egotistical in the extreme’, a set of ‘rose-coloured spectacles’.¹¹⁰ And Worden describes its ‘self-confirming’ quality and the ‘double thinking’ that it facilitated.¹¹¹ In a political context this subjectivity and ‘self-confirming’ quality resembles clever application and manipulation, which might provoke the question, ‘Did people actually believe what they were saying about God’s role in history, or did they use providential language strategically to achieve a desired political and social end?’¹¹² The key to understanding the answer to that question lies in the subjective nature of providentialism, because within an individual’s subjective exercise there might be space for both belief, and political strategy that deployed the expression of that belief. Robin Briggs underlines a need to understand how ‘men did twist religious ideas to suit themselves, while remaining aware that such manipulation could only take place within strict limits, and at a largely unconscious level.’¹¹³

What these excerpts show is that subjectivity has featured in the history of providence, and that providentialism has been examined in such a way that implies an interplay between structure and agency, between large-scale transformations and

¹⁰⁹ Thomas, *Religion*, 95, 122-3.

¹¹⁰ Walsham, *Providence*, 17.

¹¹¹ Worden, ‘Providence’, 75-6.

¹¹² See Walsham, *Providence*, 225; Freeman, ‘Providence’, 31; Guyatt, *Providence*, 6, 8.

¹¹³ Briggs, ‘Embattled Faiths’, 175.

subjects who experienced them. The benefit of thinking about subjective experience is that it highlights the lived dimension and utility of this explanatory framework. The utilisation and application of providence, its self-confirming quality through circularity of thinking; these were the dynamics not only of *national* providentialism, but also of how providence was exercised by individuals in *personal* providentialism. What gave providence its ‘power’, as Thomas put it, was that individual subjects could exercise their belief, through a course of observing, accounting and remembering, in such a way that would allow them to question or confirm, suffer or be consoled, and thus to find a way that worked for them through the challenges they encountered.

The value derived from the recovery of subjective experience in turn derives from how we conceptualise subjectivity. The idea has undergone radical revision, particularly since the 1980s, when the history of selfhood attracted a new wave of attention.¹¹⁴ Subjectivity often emerges in discussions of the self, and though ‘self’ and ‘subject’ are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not the same.¹¹⁵ The elision between the two is perhaps caused by the association between subjectivity and psychological interiority, the latter of which is posited as characteristic of the modern individualist self. This specific form of selfhood, of ‘modern inwardness, the sense of ourselves as beings with inner depths, and the connected notion that we are ‘selves’,’ has been historicised by Charles Taylor, who points to its origins in the early modern period.¹¹⁶ As for early modern selves, we cannot assume that a unitary form of self

¹¹⁴ Barbara Taylor, ‘Historical Subjectivity’, in Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor (eds.), *History and Psyche: Culture, Psychoanalysis, and the Past* (Basingstoke, 2012), 195-211, 195.

¹¹⁵ Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York, 2000), 2-3, and for definition of four types of subject, 3-4.

¹¹⁶ C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, 1989), x. See also Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2004); Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Stanford, CA, 1996); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA, 1991); Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self: Histories of*

existed, nor that subjects held a degree self-consciousness identical to our own. Rather, we need to expect in early modern subjects a ‘multifaceted interiority that varied and shifted with their relationships to environment’.¹¹⁷

Subjectivity itself is the ‘possibility of speaking with the authority of the first person’.¹¹⁸ It includes, but is not limited to, self-consciousness and personal identity. Indeed, human subjectivity can touch on ‘a dazzlingly wide variety of interrelated issues’, but an ‘essential feature of the human subject ... is the awareness or consciousness of one’s self’.¹¹⁹ Thus the subject, the first person, is self-aware and also relational, ‘emerging from connection, rather than detachment’.¹²⁰ We might think of it as an interior state or a consciousness that is in constant communication and renegotiation with an exterior where values, emotions and attitudes are constantly tested and changed, where social relationships in turn shape the quality and character of that inner life.

The model of subjectivity shared by many but not all historians is that it is constructed through human context.¹²¹ One model posits that construction happens

the Renaissance to the Present (London, 1997), esp. 1-17. See further discussion of self in chapter 2, below.

¹¹⁷ Malcolm Gaskill, ‘Afterword: Passions in Perspective’, in Laura Kounine and Michael Ostling (eds.), *Emotions in the History of Witchcraft* (London, 2016), 277. On different understandings of interiority, individuality and self, see also John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Basingstoke, 2004); Thomas Robisheaux, ‘Penance, Confession and the Self in Early Modern Lutheranism’, in Marjorie Elizabeth Plummer and Robin B. Barnes (eds.), *Ideas and Cultural Margins in Early Modern Germany: Essays in Honor of H. C. Midelfort* (Farnham, 2009), 117-30; David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984); Alexandra Walsham, ‘Ordeals of Conscience: Casuistry, Conformity, and Confessional Identity in Post-Reformation England’, in Harald E. Braun and Edward Vallance (eds.), *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700* (New York, 2004), 32-48.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Heale, *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse: Chronicles of the Self* (Basingstoke, 2003), 3.

¹¹⁹ On development of self-consciousness and personal identity as ideas in the early modern period see Udo Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume* (Oxford, 2011), quoted at 1.

¹²⁰ Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, ‘In Relation: The ‘Social Self’ and Ego-Documents’, *German History*, 28, 3 (2010), 269.

¹²¹ Mansfield, *Subjectivity*, 51-2.

through language, whereby ‘subjectivity itself ... is produced from within discourse itself’.¹²² Another posits that ‘collective rituals, performances, habits of work or sociability’ ‘imprint themselves upon the individual psyche’.¹²³ In both models the subject is historically contingent. The idea of a ‘timeless, cultureless essence of personhood’, characterised by ‘psychological depth, or interiority’, has therefore given way to ‘a cultural artefact that mutates over time’.¹²⁴

The historicist approach is not without its problems. It restricts continuity in the human psyche, meaning that historians invested in psychoanalytic ideas and tools find inadequate scope within its conceptual boundaries.¹²⁵ Lyndal Roper, for example, struggled with social and linguistic constructionism in her investigation of witchcraft because to understand it she needed to refer to its ‘psychic dimension’, to the irrational and unconscious aspects of human behaviour.¹²⁶ Others have criticised how linguistic constructionism in particular reduces subjectivity ‘to an after-effect of political discourse’, and leaves the inevitable employment of psychology and empathy in historical investigation unqualified.¹²⁷

What these criticisms demonstrate is that historians recognise the value of recovering individual subjectivities – subjectivities that shed light on historical transformation at the macro level through the micro lens of personal agency. This is the value of recovering the subjective experience of providentialism: we can

¹²² Heale, *Autobiography*, 3.

¹²³ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994), 20.

¹²⁴ Taylor, ‘Subjectivity’, 195-96; Wahrman, *Modern Self*, xi. For discussion of the influence of Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Emile Benveniste and other figures in the twentieth-century debate over the ‘subject’ see Mansfield, *Subjectivity*; Heale, *Autobiography*, 3-5; Roper, *Oedipus*, 4-13.

¹²⁵ See Taylor, ‘Subjectivity’, 195-211.

¹²⁶ Roper, *Oedipus*, 3, 13, 26.

¹²⁷ Michael Roper, ‘Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History’, *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005), 58-9; Taylor, ‘Subjectivity’, 196-199, 205.

understand the large-scale transformation in providentialism at the macro level, by examining the individual, subjective experience of providentialism at the micro level. Therefore, this thesis is an important contribution to the historiography of providence because it looks at not just one aspect of English culture, such as attitudes to the environment or economy, but looks at the entire picture through the lens of personal agency.

Having established what subjectivity is and why it is important in the history of providence – because providentialism is by its nature subjective – this section will now finish by explaining the conceptual approach taken in this study. One of the ways in which we can reconstruct individual subjectivities is by looking at emotions. Providentialism involved and provoked emotional responses, or as they will be referred to throughout the following chapters, distinct modes of feeling. The choice of this term lies in the fact that ‘emotion’ refers to a modern psychological category, not an early modern one. Also, the emotional resonances of providentialism were subtle, and not always recognisable as basic emotions such as fear, grief, sadness and happiness. What follows here is an explanation as to why looking at feeling is appropriate for a study of providentialism, and an examination of the scholarship that can help inform that approach.

The main reason for using emotion as a category of analysis in this thesis is that for the writers studied here the exercise of providentialism was clearly an emotional experience. The primary source material puts feelings on the agenda. The second reason is that emotion has featured in how providence has been written about already. Seventeenth-century religion in general has been effectively described as ‘a curious

yet moving blend of perplexity, guilt and consolation'.¹²⁸ Providence was a fundamental feature of that religion, and was also responsible for intense, if subtle, feelings. In particular, 'consolation' has been associated with providentialism. Walsham, Thomas, Winship, Shaw: these are just some of the historians who have described providence as providing consolation or comfort to those who subscribed to it, because it awarded meaning to the sometimes-incomprehensible events in individuals' lives.¹²⁹ In paying attention to the feelings involved and provoked by providentialism, this thesis is pursuing a characteristic that is already established within the history of providence.¹³⁰

The application of this approach also correlates with the rapidly expanding history of emotions, a field that emerged in the 1980s from investigations into the 'emotional codes and standards of past societies' that could help us understand 'the rules that shaped subjective life'.¹³¹ There are now numerous theories for utilising emotion as a category of analysis.¹³² Some help us think about the standards of emotional behaviour, such as Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns's 'emotionology', or about the 'normativity of emotions', such as William Reddy's 'emotional regimes'.¹³³ Reddy

¹²⁸ Briggs, 'Embattled faiths', 182; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, chs. 1-5.

¹²⁹ Walsham, *Providence*, 2-3, and on anxiety and guilt 17-18; Winship, *Seers*, 1; Thomas, *Religion*, 93-4; Scribner, 'Reformation', 486; Shaw, *Miracles*, 30; Spurr, 'Virtue', 31.

¹³⁰ See also Lloyd's discussion of the emotional resonances of providence, that change with its shifting conceptual make-up. Lloyd, *Providence*, 3-4.

¹³¹ Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns, (eds.), *Doing Emotions History* (Chicago, IL, 2014), 4.

¹³² Useful overviews include Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction* (Abingdon, 2017); Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester, 2018); Erin Sullivan, 'The History of Emotions: Past, Present, Future', *Cultural History*, 2, 1 (2013), 93-102; Rob Boddice, 'The Affective Turn: Historicizing the Emotions', in C. Tileaga and J. Byford (eds.), *Psychology and History: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (Cambridge, 2014); Matt and Stearns (eds.), *Emotions History*; Alon Confino, *et al*, 'Forum: History of Emotions', *German History*, 28, 1 (2010), 67-80; Nichole Eustace, *et al*, 'AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions', *AHR*, 117 (2012), 1487-1531; Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, trans. K. Tribe (Oxford, 2015).

¹³³ Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *AHR*, 90 (1985), 813-36; William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 129. See also Carol Z. Stearns and Peter N. Stearns (eds.), *Emotion and Social Change: Toward a New Psychohistory* (New York, 1988); Kounine and Ostling, (eds.), *Emotions*, 7; Andrew Lynch, 'Emotional Community', in Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions*, 5-6.

also developed the concept of ‘emotives’, ‘a type of speech act ... which both describes ... and changes ... the world, because emotional expression has an exploratory and a self-altering effect on the activated thought material of emotion’.¹³⁴ Emotives help us think about the relationship between emotions and expression, and the capacity of that expression to instigate change.¹³⁵ Barbara Rosenwein’s work helps us to consider how social or textual communities might also be ‘emotional communities’ where groups ‘adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions’.¹³⁶ Also available are anthropologically-inspired models designed to help us to see emotions as ‘embodied practices’, universalist models that use basic emotions theory or neuroscience to recover emotions, contrasted to the social constructionist models that would deny existence of such universal psychological or emotional categories.¹³⁷

What these models tell us is that language and embodiment are the routes to recovering emotional experience, either in its representation or the emotions themselves. Indeed, as Gaskill has observed, ‘to have substance, emotions must have

¹³⁴ Reddy, *Navigation*, 128. See also Tania M. Colwell, ‘Emotives and Emotional Regimes’, in Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions*, 7-8.

¹³⁵ Gaskill, ‘Afterword’, 273.

¹³⁶ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2006), 2, 25. See also, Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Worrying About Emotions in History’, *AHR*, 107, 3 (2002), 812-45; *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1998); *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge, 2016).

¹³⁷ Monique Scheer, ‘Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion’, *History and Theory*, 51, 2 (2012), 193-220. See ‘Introduction’, in Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions*. On basic emotions theory see Paul Ekman, ‘Basic Emotions’, in Tim Dalgleish and Michael J. Power (eds.), *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion* (Chichester, 1999; 2000), 45-60; Keith Oatley, *Emotions: A Brief History* (Oxford, 2004). On application of neurobiological theories to history of witchcraft, see Edward Bever, ‘Bullying, the Neurobiology of Emotional Aggression, and the Experience of Witchcraft’, in Kounine and Ostling (eds.), *Emotions*, 193-212. See also Plamper, *History of Emotions*; B. Mesquita and M. Boiger, ‘Emotions in Context: A Sociodynamic Model of Emotions’, *Emotion Review*, 6, 4 (2014), 298-302; J. A. Russell, ‘Affective Space is Bipolar’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 3 (1979), 345-56; Sandra Garrido and Jane W. Davidson, ‘Psychological Approaches’, in Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions*, 23-7. For social constructionist arguments see Rhodri Hayward, ‘Enduring Emotions: James L. Halliday and the Invention of the Psychological’, *Isis*, 100, 4 (2009), 827-38; Junko Tanaka-Matsumi, ‘Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Anger’, in H. Kassinove (ed.), *Anger Disorders: Definition, Diagnosis, and Treatment* (Washington, DC, 1995).

either occupied a visible space or have been expressed verbally or physically; abstract emotions, disconnected from human activity, have little historical meaning'.¹³⁸ To understand the language and embodiment of emotions in the early modern period it is important to look past the term 'emotion', because this was a psychological category developed in the nineteenth century, arising from the secularization and professionalization of psychology.¹³⁹ What we would understand as emotions were described by numerous terms: 'appetites', 'passions', and 'affections'.¹⁴⁰ These were terms inherited from Christian theologies of the soul, and they were to predominate early modern understandings until the eighteenth-century when more 'mechanistic' interpretations of passions and affections grew in popularity, coexisting with earlier Christian forms.

For most of the early modern period appetites were 'movements of the lower animal soul', such as 'hunger, thirst and sexual desire'. Passions were 'unruly and disturbed' because they signified the rebellion of that lower soul – 'of the body to the soul' – and included 'love, hate, hope, fear and anger'. The affections, on the other hand, were 'acts of the higher rational soul', love, sympathy and joy, taken to signify a closeness to God. The supremacy of the affections over the passions and appetites

¹³⁸ Gaskill, 'Afterword', 272.

¹³⁹ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, 2003), 4.

¹⁴⁰ On the development of 'emotion' see Thomas Dixon, "'Emotion': The History of a Keyword in Crisis", *Emotion Review*, 4, 4 (2012); Dixon, *Passions*; Ute Frevert, et al, *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000* (Oxford, 2014). On passions, Kirk Essary, 'Clear as Mud: Metaphor, Emotion, and Meaning in Early Modern England', *English Studies*, 98, 7 (2017), and 'Passions, Affections, or Emotions? On the Ambiguity of Sixteenth-Century Terminology', *Emotion Review* (2017), 1-8; Brian Cummings and F. Sierhuis (eds.), *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture* (Farnham, 2013); J. R. Solomon, 'You've Got to Have Soul: Understanding the Passions in Early Modern Culture', in S. Pender and N. S. Struever (eds.), *Rhetoric and Medicine in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2012); Gail Kern Paster, 'Introduction: Reading the Early Modern Passions', in Gail Kern Paster et al. (eds.), *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004), 1-20; Stephen Gaukroger (ed.), *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1998); Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford, 1997); D. L. Cairns and D. P. Nelis (eds.), *Emotions in the Classical World: Methods, Approaches, and Directions* (Stuttgart, 2016).

was attainable only through the exertion of a ‘holy will’ over the ‘carnal will’.¹⁴¹ ‘Passions’ and ‘affections’ continued to be used in the eighteenth century, with the former being a general term that could refer to ‘violent commotions of the mind’.¹⁴² ‘Emotion’ was not commonly used, though generally denoted movement or ‘any kind of agitation or disturbance (of the mind, of the body, of a mass of people, or even in the weather)’.¹⁴³

These contemporary terms allow us to contextualise emotional behaviour and expression, to appreciate its religious and ideological undertones, meaning that we can avoid the anachronism of ‘demanding’ that early modern emotions ‘count as authentic only insofar as they ring personal and sincere to our modern ears’.¹⁴⁴ Historicized emotional language or ‘emotional lexicons’, together with the tools presented by emotions historians, have encouraged early modern historians to explore the affective dimensions of their subjects and to augment their understanding of motivation or experience with a theorized approach to feelings.¹⁴⁵ There is now scholarship on the early modern iterations of emotions, such as anger, fear, hatred, guilt and shame, on the relationship between emotions and the body, health, medicine and melancholy, and its role in conflict, and community and household relationships.¹⁴⁶ There are also

¹⁴¹ Dixon, *Passions*, 21-2, ch. 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Ostling, ‘Speaking of Love in the Polish Witch Trials’, in Kounine and Ostling (eds.), *Emotions*, 159-60.

¹⁴⁵ Frevert, *et al.*, *Emotional Lexicons*.

¹⁴⁶ On early modern emotions see, M. Champion and A. Lynch, (eds.), *Understanding Emotions in Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout, 2015); Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Ordering Emotions in Europe, 1100–1800* (Leiden, 2015); J. Liliequist (ed.), *A History of Emotions, 1200-1800* (London, 2012); Erin Sullivan, *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Manchester, 2015); Bernard Capp, ‘Jesus Wept, But Did the Englishman? Masculinity and the Display of Emotion in Early Modern England’, *P&P*, 224, 1 (2014), 75-108; Andy Wood, ‘Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2006), 803-26; K. A. E. Enekel and A. Traninger (eds.), *Discourses of Anger in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 2015); P. Coleman, *Anger, Gratitude and the Enlightenment Writer* (Oxford, 2011); Kristine Johanson, ‘On the Possibility of Early Modern Nostalgias’, *Parergon*, 33, 2 (2016), 1-15; Stephanie Trigg, ‘Samuel Pepys and the Great Fire of London: Trauma and Emotion, Private and Public’, in Jenny Spinks and Charles Zika (eds.), *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400-1700*

works utilising these tools to study religious or supernatural beliefs, practices and behaviours, and this study will draw on these to provide context for the emotionality of providentialism.¹⁴⁷ Many of these works are not studies of emotion *per se*, but instead seek to answer a historical question by approaching it with an alertness to the role of emotions.¹⁴⁸

(Basingstoke, 2016), 341-56; Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th-15th Centuries* (New York, 1990); Dijkhuizen and Enenkel (eds.), *Sense of Suffering*; M. J. Braddick and J. Innes (eds.), *Suffering and Happiness in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016). On emotions and the body, health, medicine and melancholy see, Sandro Cavallo and Tessa Storey (eds.), *Conserving Health in Early Modern Culture: Bodies and Environments in Italy and England* (Manchester, 2017); Elena Carrera (ed.), *Emotions and Health, 1200-1700* (Leiden, 2013); Otniel E. Dror, *et al* (eds.), 'History of Science and the Emotions', *Osiris*, 31, 1 (2016); Robert A. Erickson, *The Language of the Heart, 1600-1750* (Philadelphia, PA, 1997); Fay Bound Alberti, *Matters of the Heart: History, Medicine and Emotions* (Oxford, 2010); Fay Bound Alberti, 'Bodies, Hearts, and Minds: Why Emotions Matter to Historians of Science and Medicine', *Isis*, 100, 4 (2009), 798-810; J. Bos, 'The Decline of Character: Humoral Psychology in Ancient and Early Modern Medicine', *History of Human Sciences*, 22, 3 (2009), 29-50; Ulinka Rublack, 'Fluxes: The Early Modern Body and the Emotions', *History Workshop Journal*, 52 (2002), 1-16; Ali Hagggett (ed.), 'Special Issue: On Balance: Lifestyle, Mental Health and Wellbeing', *Palgrave Communications* (2016); Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2016); D. Drew, *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (New York, 2013); A. Gowland, 'Consolations for Melancholy in Renaissance Humanism', *Society and Politics*, 6, 1 (2012), 10-38; D. Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005); H. C. Erik Midelfort, 'Sin, Melancholy, Obsession: Insanity and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany', in Steven L. Kaplan, *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin, 1984). On conflict and communities see, Laura Kounine and S. Cummins (eds.), *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2016); Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900* (Basingstoke, 2007); Susan Broomhall, *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650-1850* (London, 2015); Sabean, *Power in the Blood*.

¹⁴⁷ See, John Corrigan, 'Religion and Emotions', in Matt and Stearns (eds.), *Emotions History*, 143-163; Spinks and Zika (eds.), *Disaster*; Merridee Bailey and Katie Barclay (eds.), *Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe, 1200-1920* (Basingstoke, 2017); Michael Heyd, 'Changing Emotions? The Decline of Original Sin On the Eve of the Enlightenment', in Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills (eds.), *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (Aldershot, 2005); Piero Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe* (University Park, PA, 1991); Miri Rubin, 'Emotion and Devotion: The Meaning of Mary in Medieval Religious Cultures', *The Natalie Zemon Davies Annual Lecture Series*, vol. 2 (2009); R. Garrod and Y. Haskell (eds.), *Changing Heart: Performing Jesuit Emotions Between Europe, Asia and the Americas* (Leiden, 2016); S. C. Karant-Nunn, "'Christians' Mourning and Lament Should Not be Like the Heathens": The Suppression of Religious Emotion in the Reformation', in J. M. Headley, H. J. Hillerbrand and A. J. Papalas (eds.), *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan* (Aldershot, 2004), 107-30; P. Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008); Coffey (ed.), *Heart Religion*; R. K. Rittgers, 'Grief and Consolation in Early Modern Lutheran Devotion: The Case of Johannes Christoph Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Bereavement* (1619)', *Church History*, 81, 3 (2012), 601-30; Alec Ryrie and J. Martin (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2012); Alec Ryrie and T. Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke 2016).

¹⁴⁸ For example, Ryrie, *Being Protestant*; Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Feeling*. This approach has been used effectively in the history of witchcraft. See Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Emotions and Imagination in the English Civil war', in J. Newton and J. Bath (eds.), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604*

This is the approach taken in this thesis: the subjective experience of providentialism is sought, but it is argued that an alertness to the affective dimension of providentialism will further our ability to understand and reconstruct that experience. In many of the studies adopting this approach great care has been taken to not distort the affective quality of the sources used, and not to identify discrete or basic emotions when what is recovered or represented resembles an indiscriminate mess of feelings. This is also an approach adopted here – caution is taken against stretching interpretation further than what the sources will allow. To this end the thesis will use the term ‘distinct modes of feeling’; it is necessarily imprecise because the feelings provoked by providentialism were not always precise, but were often subtle. Feelings such as ambivalence, affliction, confidence and the yearning for contentment are indeed subtle feelings, but they are nevertheless significant because they tell us what providentialism felt like to those who exercised and lived by it. Besides, focussing only on extreme emotions can be problematic because, as Graham Richards observes, doing so risks misrepresenting ‘quotidian emotional lives’. His comment to illustrate the point, ‘I certainly cannot recall the last time I fled in terror’, speaks of perhaps more modern comfort than we can attribute to early modern subjects, but it does highlight that subtler emotions such as irritation or frustration, nagging doubt, boredom and amusement need to enter our tool box as much as anger and despair and other extreme emotions.¹⁴⁹

(Leiden, 2008), 161-81; Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil and Emotions in Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 2017); Kounine and Ostling (eds.), *Emotions*; M. Stephen, ‘Witchcraft, Grief, and the Ambivalence of Emotions’, *American Ethnologist*, 26, 3 (1999), 690-710; Roper, *Oedipus*; Roper, *Witch Craze*; Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, From Ancient Times to the Present* (London, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ Graham Richards, ‘Emotions into Words – Or Words into Emotions?’, in Gouk and Hills (eds.), *Representing Emotions*, 51.

In addition to the caution against over-interpreting emotional states, this thesis cautions against reading too much coherence and meaning in the emotional resonances of religious practice. As will be discussed in chapter 3, mystery was a core characteristic of providence, thus meaning and clarity were simply not always available to the individual providentialist.¹⁵⁰

To summarise, this thesis contributes an account of providentialism which will provide greater understanding of the large-scale transformations in providence c.1660-c.1720 by looking through the micro lens of subjective experience. In examining individual experience the thesis will qualify the persistence (or decline) of personal providentialism, and by taking a cross-section of writers from the middling and better sorts it will provide as representative a sample as the sources allow. Finally, the thesis will recover experiences of providentialism by being alert to the distinct modes of feeling involved in and provoked by the exercise of the belief, and to the ways in which it informed how individuals perceived themselves within their worlds.

1.4. Structure

The sequence of chapters steadily builds an account of the subjective experience of providentialism. Some of the chapters accentuate threads of continuity, whereas others identify points of change. With exception to chapter 2 each uses a case study of a self-writer to illustrate how individuals exercised their belief in providence, how they applied it to the various areas of their lives, and how this exercise provoked distinct modes of feeling and informed how they viewed themselves. There are shared traits among the writers, but each source was selected because it communicates something

¹⁵⁰ Corrigan, 'Religion and Emotions', in Matt and Stearns (eds.), *Emotions History*, 155-56.

different about providentialism. Each individual belongs to either the same or a later generation than in the previous chapter, providing a loosely chronological narrative.

Chapter 2 establishes why the thesis uses the sources it does: first-person accounts. Throughout the thesis it will be argued that providentialism was exercised and enacted through self-writing, which makes these texts uniquely placed to communicate the subjective experience of providentialism. This chapter explains the basis of this argument, offering a conceptualisation of the creative act of memory in self-writing, and describing what providence looks like in a personal account. It will also explain how the case studies were selected. It is therefore an instrumental chapter that provides the rationale for the source-base consulted in the thesis, and the conceptualisation needed to understand what follows in later chapters.

Chapter 3 offers the first case study. It explains that providence was an inherently mysterious idea, which meant that it was very malleable, and elastic. The consequence of providence's elasticity – its ability to explain everything – could be that it explained very little, because the providential signs were contradictory. The case study of Elizabeth Freke (1642-1714) offers insights into this problem. A wealthy, miserable woman, Freke accounted her life in her 'remembrances', amidst old age, infirmity and isolation. She experienced deeply ambivalent, conflicted feelings about her life, and her exercise of providentialism reinforced and further provoked that ambivalence, because she discerned contradictory providential meaning in her life events. This chapter therefore serves as a reminder that although providence was an explanatory framework it did not always offer clarity, a reminder also that there will be limitations to what we can grasp of the experience of providentialism.

Chapter 4, in contrast, presents an individual who pursued the clear providential meaning behind every event, to the extent that he anticipated providences. Robert

Meeke (1656-1724), an Anglican curate of modest means, kept a spiritual diary where he eagerly sought out providences and scrutinised his heart for those sins that had, and would, provoke afflictions. Meeke sought feeling through providentialism, because feeling affections would show that he was receptive to God's especial, providential attentions. His diary exhibits threads of continuity in providentialism, mainly because he was writing in the tradition established by early seventeenth-century puritan writers. The chapter therefore demonstrates continuity in the experience of providentialism, and is also a good comparison against which the following two chapters can be measured.

Chapter 5 focusses on a writer who by his biography we might expect to be a practitioner of traditional 'hotter' providentialism. Samuel Jeake (1652-99) was a nonconformist merchant from Rye, the son of the leader of that community, who experienced persecution for his nonconformity during the 1680s. His diary, however, offers an altered picture of providentialism. Not only did Jeake synthesise his providential ideas with astrological ones, but he also paid little attention to the duality of providence, only to those 'smiling providences' that denoted God's benevolent care. It is argued that his providentialism awarded him a sense of confidence that allowed him to face the uncertainties and risks that his environment and profession presented. The chapter points to a shift in providential belief away from a focus on judgment and a wrathful God, towards the benevolent deity often associated with eighteenth-century Anglican belief.

Chapter 6 also argues that providentialism was changing – not dramatically, but noticeably. The diary of Edmund Harrold (1678-1721) is the sad testament of a man who struggled against alcoholism, and for whom providentialism was a crucial tool in his pursuit of resolution against his troubles. The noticeable difference between

Harrold and Meeke's providentialism is that Harrold had an ideal state in mind when he exercised the belief. In contrast to Meeke who sought affection and lively feeling, Harrold sought quiet contentment and satisfaction of mind regardless of the specific providences he received. His diary therefore correlates with arguments that this period witnessed a transition to a different kind of providentialism, characterised by resignation to God's will. Harrold's diary takes the thesis to 1715, at which point the chapters then conclude.

These diaries, remembrances and reviews make abundantly clear the importance of this belief in how these writers experienced everyday life, how deeply they felt its consequences, and how it noticeably shaped how they viewed themselves and others. They illustrate how malleable providence was and how it could be adapted to social, religious, economic, intellectual and ideological conditions. They show that the subjectivity of providence ensured the continuing appeal and utility of this belief during this period of transition, into the eighteenth century.

2. Providence and Self-Writing

Reflecting upon these things and considering all the passages of Divine providence towards me ever since I was called to this station, I doe now set up this monument of God's infinite and transcending mercy to me.

3 January 1690, Diary of Thomas Rokeby ¹

In 1688 Thomas Rokeby (c.1631-1699), a Yorkshireman and son of the Cromwellian officer William Rokeby, was nominated to serve as a judge at the Court of Common Pleas. Aged 57, Rokeby then foresaw a 'very great change in my way and manner of living' from 'my private, retired and easy condition into a publike, noisy, tiresome and uneasy condition, for which my own strength and abilitys are very unfit and unequal'.² At this turning point in his life Rokeby began writing a journal, in which he kept notes of the journeys and duties his new position occasioned, and his observations of the hand of divine providence in the passing of events. He observed and accounted these dispensations of divine providence in order to remember and fix them in his mind: to set up a monument.

Given that Rokeby prefaced his journal with the instruction 'this is not to be divulged' we can assume that his writing was a private enterprise, provoked by a wish to reflect on his new elevated position, one that he considered, '(as I apprehend)', to be a placement by 'special providence'.³ His providentialism was then exercised

¹ J. Raine (ed.), *A Brief Memoir of Mr Justice Rokeby* (Surtees Soc. xxxvii, Durham, 1861), 44.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

³ *Ibid.*, iii.

through his writing, and we can discern his practice and use of the idea in such parenthetical comments as, ‘I tooke this letter to be the voice of Providence calling me up (If I was mistaken herein the Lord pardon me)’.⁴ In these daily notes it appears that the unquietness of his mind and the weight of his burdens were eased, and his faith was strengthened by the apprehension of God exercising good providences towards him.⁵ His purpose was to ‘stir up my own heart’, to look upon ‘ordinary and common things ... as the special disposals of Divine providence’, and to have ‘an abiding law of thankfulness written upon my heart and life.’ He wanted to surrender his memory to God, and thereby be closer to him.⁶ The powerful agency driving this surrender of memory and self lay in the writing of his first-person account.

What Rokeby’s ‘monument’ signifies is a relationship between self-writing – a creative act of memory – and the exercise of providentialism – the observing, accounting and remembering of providences. It will be argued that the exercise of providentialism was enacted through self-writing; the latter facilitated the former. This chapter will explain why this is the case, and why first-person accounts are so uniquely suited to a study of the subjective experience of providentialism *c.*1660-*c.*1720.

Section 2.1., will explore autobiography and diary in early modern England. This will be a substantial section which surveys the nature of early modern autobiographical writing, tracing the emergence and proliferation of the spiritual diary and its influence on late seventeenth and eighteenth century self-writers. It will also discuss who was writing a first-person account in the period studied in this thesis, why they were writing, and who for. It will consult both primary and secondary sources to achieve this. Section 2.2. will then address the relationship between autobiographical writing

⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 32-3, 34, 37-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 61, 28-9.

and the self. This section again surveys critical secondary literature, but will also provide a sense of how this relationship is conceptualised in this thesis, namely, that these texts were creative acts of memory and, given that memory is constitutive of our sense of self, what was written was therefore constitutive and reflective of the writer's sense of self.

Section 2.3. will then address some of the methodological problems with studying providence in these sources. It will describe what providence looks like in a personal account, including what we might consider to be 'typical' providential language and utterances. It will explain what was required of the sources used in the main case studies in chapters 3-6. Then it will explain what is meant by the 'exercise of providentialism', a phrase that is used throughout the thesis. It will clarify how and why this exercise was enacted through self-writing and what that exercise meant for the writers. The chapter will then conclude in section 2.4., indicating the direction taken in chapter 3.

2.1. Early Modern Autobiography

This section addresses several issues and questions. It will provide working definitions of autobiography and diary and assess their relevance to early modern texts. It will then trace the emergence of the spiritual diary and how it became the prevalent form of autobiographical writing in the seventeenth century. The section will then shift focus onto the period studied in this thesis, and will address how the spiritual diary influenced writers who were not only seeking spiritual exercise in their writing, and who adapted that type of text to suit their interests and concerns. It will also examine who was writing personal accounts in this period, and why they were writing (and who

for). The section will conclude by reflecting on the importance of memory in self-writing, which leads into section 2.2.

The sources used in this study can be most easily described as personal documents.⁷ They are an account of events written from the perspective of the author, who experienced them. Some of the sources are recognisable as diaries and some as autobiographies. Others, however, do not easily conform to these categories and instead occupy a liminal area between them. Some scholars have referred to the kind of sources used here as ‘autobiographical texts’, ‘life-writings’ or ‘ego-documents’, others as ‘testimonies to the self’, ‘self-writings’ or ‘personal accounts’. Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack’s challenging observation could not be more relevant: that with these documents ‘we are dealing... with not just a particular type of source’, but with a source ‘which uniquely ... open[s] up a wide set of theoretical issues and questions of history and historiography’.⁸ The first part of this section addresses the issues relevant to this thesis, such as definitions, and the most prevalent type of early modern self-writing.

For much of its existence, diary has been considered as the less sophisticated sister to autobiography. The body of scholarship regarding diary’s development as a genre is dwarfed by that which is dedicated to autobiography, perhaps due to the perception held by some scholars that as a genre diary is ‘inherently stable and unproblematic’.⁹ Felicity Nussbaum, however, presented a more nuanced conceptualisation of the genre. She defined diary and journal as ‘works written to the moment, rather from a

⁷ See Laura Sangha, ‘Personal Documents’, in Laura Sangha and Jonathan Willis (eds.), *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources* (Abingdon, 2016), 107-128.

⁸ For a discussion of terms see Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, ‘In Relation: The ‘Social Self’ and Ego-Documents’, *German History*, 28, 3 (2010), 263.

⁹ Tom Webster, ‘Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality’, *HJ*, 39, 1 (1996), 35.

retrospective time and stance'. Rather than being a 'failed version of autobiography,' diary 'is the thing itself... a mode of perceiving reality and a signifying system within the discursive practices available in the social-cultural domain'. It is a 'serial narrative form' insofar as narrative is delivered, and then quashed, and then re-formed again.¹⁰

In contrast, autobiography is usually considered to be a unified narrative, where a form of self or personality has been realised and the process of that realisation is presented through a beginning, middle, and end. But defining autobiography as a literary genre has been notoriously difficult; James Olney declared it 'virtually impossible'.¹¹ Debates over definitions, 'authenticity' and intention have been particularly intense since the middle of the twentieth century.¹² Despite the apparent 'impossibility' of the task, scholars continue to take up the challenge of conceptual slipperiness and have framed workable definitions. Philippe Lejeune, for example, has

¹⁰ Felicity A. Nussbaum, 'Toward Conceptualizing Diary', in Trev Lynn Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (Abingdon, 2007), iv, 3, 11. See also Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore, MD, 1989); Arthur Ponsonby, *English Diaries: A Review of English Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century with an Introduction on Diary Writing* (London, 1923); R. A. Fothergill, *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries* (London, 1974); L. Lishfin, *Ariadne's Thread: A Collection of Contemporary Women's Journals* (New York, 1982); P. C. Rosenblatt, *Bitter Bitter Tears: Nineteenth Century Diarists and Twentieth Century Grief Theories* (Minneapolis, MN, 1983); T. Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries* (New York, 1984). For bibliographies of English or British diaries, William Matthews, *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942* (London, 1950); Patricia P. Havlice, *And So to Bed: A Bibliography of Diaries Published in English* (Metuchen, NJ, 1987); Christopher Handley (ed.), *An Annotated Bibliography of Diaries Printed in English*, 3rd edn (Aldeburgh, 2002).

¹¹ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ, 1972), 38, quoted in Linda Anderson, *Autobiography*, 2nd edn. (Abingdon, 2011), 5.

¹² Anderson, *Autobiography*, provides a good introduction to debates, and for important essays see Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography*. Debate c.1960-80 can be seen in the following, Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge, MA, 1960); John N. Morris, *Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to John Stuart Mill* (New York, 1966); Olney, *Metaphors of Self*; James Olney, 'Introduction', and George Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', trans. James Olney, in James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, NJ, 1980); Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA, 1976); Elizabeth Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore, MD, 1976); Karl Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago, IL, 1978); William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, CT, 1980). See also a radical poststructuralist intervention in the debate, which heralded the 'end' of autobiography, in Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-Facement', *Modern Language Notes*, 94, 5 (1979), 919-30.

called autobiography ‘a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality’. He suggested that the author, narrator and protagonist must share an identity for a text to be recognisable as autobiography.¹³

These definitions cannot provide much guidance, however, without a sense of their own historicity, and the development of these genres. ‘Autobiography’ was a term coined in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, when it was conceptualised as distinctive from other writing practices.¹⁴ This trajectory is confirmed by Michael Mascuch’s argument, which identifies the advent of the ‘unified, retrospective first-person prose narrative’, or the modern autobiography, in England during the 1790s, exemplified by the *Memoirs* of James Lackington, a lapsed Methodist bookseller. Such works represented the ‘watershed in the evolution of autobiographical practice’.¹⁵

The relative youth of the genre’s nomenclature and conceptualisation might suggest the term as an inappropriate, anachronistic description of earlier works. Indeed, the fact that biography and autobiography are modern categories has resulted in several ‘well-worn commonplaces’ appearing in historiography regarding the medieval period. For example, medieval writers supposedly did not and could not produce such fully-formed written lives as exemplified by Rousseau or Wordsworth. Their biographies were neither as ‘personal’ nor as ‘ambitious’ as their twentieth-

¹³ Philippe Lejeune, ‘The Autobiographical Contract’, in Tzvetan Todorov (ed.), *French Literary Theory Today* (Cambridge, 1982), 193, quoted in Anderson, *Autobiography*, 2. Lejeune’s definition is also discussed in Meredith Anne Skura, *Tudor Autobiography: Listening For Inwardness* (London, 2008), 2.

¹⁴ James Treadwell, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834* (Oxford, 2005), 3. The 1809 date is commonly given as the first instance, in Robert Southey’s use in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford, 2012), 12. Anderson suggests an earlier date, Anderson, *Autobiography*, 6.

¹⁵ Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Stanford, CA, 1996), 6, 18.

century counterparts.¹⁶ According to mid twentieth-century critics such as George Gusdorf and Roy Pascal, autobiography was also a uniquely modern and Western creation. Many of these commonplaces have been examined, qualified, and sometimes rejected in recent years; an example of some scholars' frustrations can be seen in David Aers's sharp criticism of the 'scrupulousness' of some research, and the idealistic (if unintentional) pedalling of myths of a homogeneous medieval culture and society.¹⁷ Despite the modern terminology, one need only look at such examples as Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions* (354-430), Guibert de Nogent's memoirs (c.1055-1124), and Margery Kempe's 'book' (c.1373 – after 1439) to appreciate that the autobiographical 'itch to record' predated the early modern period.¹⁸ That said, it must be acknowledged that it was not until the seventeenth century that we can see the autobiographical text become prolific.

It was in the early modern period that a 'journalistic itch' gained pace at a popular level, manifesting itself in diaries and other first-person discourse, developing into the more recognisable modern autobiography later in the eighteenth century.¹⁹ Accepting this trajectory, it should come as no surprise that early modern autobiographical texts cannot easily be split into the two categories of 'diary' and 'autobiography' described above. There was no hard, fixed boundary between them until later.²⁰ To negotiate numerous early modern examples scholars have instead constructed categories that

¹⁶ Jay Rubenstein, 'Biography and Autobiography in the Middle Ages', in Nancy F. Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005), 22.

¹⁷ David Aers, 'A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject'', in *idem.* (ed.), *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (Hemel Hemstead, 1992), 177-202. See also Kristen E. Brustad, Michael Cooperson, Jamal J. Elias, *et al.*, 'The Fallacy of Western Origins', in Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography*, ii, 375-77.

¹⁸ Carolyn J. B. Hammond (ed.), *Augustine: Confessions*, 2 vols. (London, 2014); Paul J. Archambault (ed.), *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* (University Park, PA, 1996); Anthony Bale, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Oxford, 2015).

¹⁹ Webster, 'Writing', 40; Mascuch, *Origins*, 19.

²⁰ Sangha, 'Documents', 122-23.

work specifically for this period. Paul Delany, for example, framed a working definition for the period which encompassed a large variety of individual forms.²¹ The need for flexibility in approaching these texts is also reflected in Tom Webster's argument for the dismantling of 'our rigid generic boundaries', which would allow us 'to conceive a broader and rather less stable category which we might call 'ego-literatures''.²² The overall impression created is that any conceptualisation of early modern autobiographical texts needs to allow for their polymorphous, protean characteristics, and that particular sources may not follow recognisable conventions or fit into clean categories.

A recent study that directly addresses and even embraces this polymorphous quality is Adam Smyth's *Autobiography in Early Modern England*. Rather than trying to measure how far early modern autobiography does *not* conform to later definitions, Smyth instead presents a recalibrated approach. This approach helps conceptualise, and contextualise, the texts that appear in the following chapters. Instead of 'life-writing', 'ego-documents', 'autobiographies', 'journals' or 'diaries', Smyth adopts the term 'personal accounts' to describe a plethora of documents that contain self-, or autobiographical writing. He adapts Meredith Anne Skura's work, which seeks to examine self-reflection 'before the modern "autobiography" or "self" was culturally encoded'.²³ Smyth uses Skura's observation that early modern writers would often produce a written life 'as part of some other occasion', rather than a clearly separate composition.²⁴ This allows him to look again at sources that would perhaps be rejected

²¹ Paul Delany, *British Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1969), 1, 23.

²² Webster, 'Writing'; 35-6.

²³ Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, 2.

²⁴ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010); Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, cited in Smyth at 7-8.

for not fitting the autobiographical template. His monograph examines almanacs, financial accounts, commonplace books and parish registers as sites of self-writing.

Smyth's findings serve to remind us that early modern writers were 'improvisers', and encourage us to reflect on what expectations we bring to both archive and text. If we expect coherence and adherence to modern generic categories then we are likely to be disappointed. By passing over sources such as account or commonplace books we unwittingly omit potentially rich source material from the study of self-writing in the period.²⁵ Indeed, not to accept Smyth's intervention is to run the risk of falling into restrictive, formalist ideas of autobiography, and the 'conceptual straitjacket' responsible for the neglect of popular autobiography (in literary studies, at least) perceived by James S. Amelang in the late 1990s.²⁶

As for diary-writing, Smyth writes that imagining the process as somehow 'spontaneous, unmediated, artless, and candid' simply does not hold up; instead it should be understood as part of a 'retrospective, mediated, intertextual process', because 'early modern life-writing was as much about writing as it was about life'.²⁷ Thus, while bibliographer William Matthews wrote that diaries were 'comparatively uncontaminated by stylistic conventions and fashions', we cannot now, following the problematization presented in this scholarship, hold his statement to be entirely the case. There was indeed the freedom to use everyday language in diaries and there is great value in that quotidian dimension, but the 'experimentation, revision and

²⁵ On commonplace books see chapter 3, below. See also Webster, 'Writing', 36; Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987); Victoria E. Burke, 'Recent Studies in Commonplace Books', *English Literary Renaissance*, 43, 1 (2013), 153-77; David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge, 2010).

²⁶ James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, CA, 1998), 13.

²⁷ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 2-3.

resistance' within these 'messy documents' points to a more complex construction and practice.²⁸

Having discussed some working definitions of diary and autobiography, and their applicability to the early modern period, this section will now focus on the emergence and proliferation of the spiritual diary. Skura's and Smyth's observation about autobiographical writing being an improvised practice, and often emerging from some 'other occasion', partly explains the emergence of this classic 'type' of autobiographical text in the seventeenth century.²⁹ This observation is supported by Owen C. Watkins's description of puritan literature as being created 'in a fit of absent-mindedness'. Diaries were written to record experiences in order 'to offer experimental proof of some of the eternal truths of Christianity', and spiritual autobiographies were the retrospective narrative of one's spiritual journey.³⁰ The 'other occasion', therefore, was self-examination, for which the self-written account was the improvised instrument.

This discipline of introspection and employing the diary as an instrument of self-examination grew apace with the popularity of experimental Calvinism from the middle of the Elizabethan period onwards, and with the devotional manuals emerging to guide practice. One such manual by William Whatley (1618) recommended that

²⁸ Matthews, *British Diaries*, vii; Lynch, *Autobiography*, 16; Sangha, 'Documents', 109.

²⁹ Michael Hunter, 'Life-Writing in Early Modern England', *HJ*, 56, 2 (2013), 583. See also Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 298-314; Margo Todd, 'Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward', *Journal of British Studies*, 31, 3 (1992), 236-264; Elspeth Findlay 'Ralph Thoresby the Diarist: The Late Seventeenth-Century Pious Diary and its Demise', *Seventeenth Century*, 17, 1 (2002), 108-130; Dean Ebner, *Autobiography in Seventeenth-Century England: Theology and the Self* (The Hague, Paris, 1971); Effie Botonaki, 'Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting, and Account Keeping', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 30 (1999), 3-21. On Quaker spiritual diaries see Howard H. Brinton, *Quaker Journals: Varieties of Religious Experience Among Friends* (Wallingford, PA, 1972); Catie Gill, 'Identities in Quaker Women's Writing, 1652-1660', *Women's Writing*, 9 (2002), 267-82; Hilary Hind, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester, 1996).

³⁰ Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London, 1972), 1-2.

those who strove to live a godly life should ‘descend into your owne soules, and well ... prosecute the examination of your owne estates; whether you be as yet regenerated or not... though must follow this inquiry crosse’.³¹ An influential text that transformed this self-examination into writing was Richard Rogers’ *Seven Treatises* (1603).³² Mascuch describes this text as made of ‘discrete, dated entries’, wherein Rogers notes spiritual and ‘worthy things’ such as his worship or his neglect of duties. The diary was valuable as a means of self-dissection, and it was ‘a personal speculum through which he saw the condition of his own heart’.³³ Routine reflection upon actions, faults and sins explains why the spiritual diary is said to have replaced oral confession in post-Reformation religious practice; William Haller described it as the ‘Puritan’s confessional’, wherein the writer ‘could fling upon his God the fear and weakness he found in his heart but would not betray to the world’.³⁴

The purpose of this introspective practice was to watch one’s moral and spiritual life ‘for the fruits of the Spirit, which were the outward signs of saving grace in [one’s] heart’.³⁵ Thomas Fuller described the practice as ‘conscientiousness’, because ‘he can hardly be an ill husband, who casteth up his receipts and expenses every night, and such a soul is, or would be good, which enters into a daily Scrutiny of his own actions’.³⁶ The watching of one’s life was part of the struggle to find assurance, a search for signs that one might be saved, as one of the *elect*. The diary therefore

³¹ William Whatley, *The New Birth: or, a Treatise of Regeneration* (1618), 87-9, quoted in David Booy (ed.), *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654, A Selection* (Aldershot, 2007), 16.

³² M. M. Knappen (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries* (Gloucester, 1966). Influential texts for spiritual diarists included Arthur Dent, *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* (1601); John Beadle, *Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian* (1656); Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Divines* (1662); Richard Baxter, *This Mischiefs of Self-Ignorance, and the Benefits of Self-Acquaintance* (1662). See also discussion of influential texts in Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, 11; William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1957), 96-97.

³³ Mascuch, *Origins*, 77-81.

³⁴ Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, 18; Haller, *Puritanism*, 38.

³⁵ Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, 9.

³⁶ Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain, from the Birth of Jesus Christ Until the Year MDCXLVIII*, Book XI, XVIIth Century (1655), 218.

consisted of scrutiny of all actions, and relationships with family, neighbours and fellow saints, from waking to retiring.³⁷ It also included other exhortative and devotional material such as sermon notes, poetry, meditations, and prayers. Most important, however, was the recording of God's mercies and judgements. The duty of the diarist was to observe, to record, to mark and inscribe them upon the heart, and to remember and improve on the exemplary signal providences God had sent. It is for this reason that the spiritual diary provides essential historical context for this thesis; it was the written space that facilitated the exercise of providentialism.

As generations of the godly community passed, further texts emerged providing advice for observing and accounting both one's actions and God's providences through recommended routines and written templates. These were accompanied by endorsements of the practice by influential ministers, such as that made by Hugh Peter to his congregation in 1643.³⁸ John Beadle, an Essex clergyman, also praised the keeping of a journal in a sermon in the 1630s.³⁹ Kathleen Lynch argues that the influence of these landmark texts should not be underestimated, and by studying the role of booksellers and printers in the distribution of texts she has put canonical works firmly back in the conversation about the proliferation of autobiographical texts in the period.⁴⁰ Indeed, the number of extant spiritual diaries from this period suggests that these canonical texts and recommendations must have inspired many godly individuals to begin a written life.⁴¹ An often-cited example from the period, and a figure used to exemplify the 'hotter sort of providentialist', is the London woodturner

³⁷ Webster, 'Writing', 37.

³⁸ Andrew Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720', *The Journal of British Studies*, 46, 4 (2007), 799.

³⁹ Beadle, *Journal*, cited in Sangha, 'Documents', 110, 126 n. 13.

⁴⁰ Lynch, *Autobiography*, 3-4.

⁴¹ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 299. See list of early seventeenth-century examples Webster, 'Writing', 37, n. 24.

Nehemiah Wallington. Wallington (1598-1658) was in Hugh Peter's congregation in 1643, and upon hearing the endorsement of keeping a daily record he was pleased, writing 'this matter ... did like me well, because by God's mercy I practice it already'.⁴² He kept fifty notebooks recording the years 1618-54, of which seven survive, stating that his 'cheife intente of this my writing' was 'to bring glory to God'. In his recent edition of the notebooks David Booy notes that Wallington seemed to have 'a deep-rooted need, perhaps a compulsion' to keep these accounts, an observation reflected in Wallington's comment that 'I could not rest nor sleep well my mind was so unquiet, which did inforce me to make this Booke called A Record of Gods Mercies to my soule and body... As I lay in my bead I did purpos on Newyers day, to begine a new life'.⁴³

Wallington's notebooks exemplify the resistance against modern generic categorisation, often found in early modern personal documents. There are, however, traits that make the notebooks recognisable (even 'typical') as spiritual diaries, such as the degree of self-examination, the recording of providences, and the striving for assurance. Comparing the notebooks with diaries of Richard Rogers, Samuel Ward and Ralph Josselin, it appears that a 'predominant type' emerged in the early to mid-seventeenth century, and 'the pattern they [the writers] were taught, they sought for; the pattern they sought, they experienced'.⁴⁴ The notebooks also serve as an illustration of the utility of diary-keeping for the godly figure, in how they could be

⁴² Booy, *Notebooks*, 11. Also quoted in Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, CA, 1985), 11.

⁴³ Booy, *Notebooks*, 29.

⁴⁴ Knappen, *Diaries*, 1; Alan MacFarlane (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (Oxford, 1976). Quotation from Peter J. Carlton, 'Bunyan: Language, Convention, Authority', *ELH*, 51 (1984), 29, quoted in Anderson, *Autobiography*, 30.

shaped to perform a function. It is due to this appealing utility that diary-writing came to occupy a prominent position in godly culture and practice.

The utility of spiritual diaries is an aspect explored by Andrew Cambers in his study of puritan reading practices. We should understand the spiritual diary as a practice sitting alongside the active role of reading in puritan religiosity, alongside both silent and collective study, the dog-earing of pages and scribbling in margins. Cambers argues that reading was an integral part of puritan self-identity, and was also a social practice which ‘both bound the godly together and helped to set them apart from their non-godly neighbours’.⁴⁵ Towards the later seventeenth century, in particular, the spiritual diary can be understood in a more sociable context because diaries were circulated amongst godly communities, albeit mostly among circles of friends, family and those within the diarist’s congregation.⁴⁶ Their utility, their function, went beyond the sphere of the writer and out into a consuming, reading community, serving as a source of exhortation and spiritual exercise. They then joined the vast field of consumable godly literature, such as the compilations of providential cautionary tales and printed lives of influential godly figures.⁴⁷

The direction of travel and influence went both ways between these texts; diarists continued to reflect on what they read in their diaries, to be passed on to their readers in turn. And all for the praise and glory of God, and the edification of the godly. James

⁴⁵ Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge, 2011), 7-8.

⁴⁶ Cambers, ‘Reading, the Godly’, 800.

⁴⁷ See Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1981); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999); Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (London, 2002). For similar studies of New England see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England* (New York, 1989); Hugh Amory (eds.), *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2000); Matthew P. Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007).

Fretwell reflected that ‘the wonderful and almost miraculous invention of the art of print... has already done so much good in the world’, and that the published accounts of the lives ‘of such men ... whose lives have been exemplarily pious... I doubt not but much good has been done by this means, and that many others have been thereby provoked to follow ‘em in love and good works’.⁴⁸ Perhaps Fretwell would have been pleased to know that it was ‘exemplarily pious’ figures that inspired nonconformist minister John Rastrick’s self-writing during his time at Cambridge 1667-69:

Clark’s Martyrologys and Lives exceedingly pleased and delighted mee ... The examples there mightily excited, and encouraged me, for here I met with persons in my own condition... I got some of Mr Baxters works which very much affected me. So that ... further by the Examples and Directions in such Books as these; I suffered not God’s providences to me (which I had experienced), onely to fluctuate in my weary mind But I took pen in hand, and committed them to paper to be ready for use.⁴⁹

Rastrick (1650-1727) makes clear that the writings of Samuel Clark and Richard Baxter influenced his own diary-writing and practice in very direct ways. His and Fretwell’s comments perhaps give credence to Lynch’s reflections on Harold Love’s observation on scribal publication, that ‘whatever the medium, publication does not simply transmit information; it transmits elements of identity – available for the taking or the leaving’.⁵⁰ For Rastrick, it seems, it was for the taking.

The publication of lives of ‘exemplarily pious’ figures is arguably the reason for the proliferation of the other strand of godly self-writing: the spiritual autobiography. These texts, like the diaries, had recognisable traits. G. A. Starr described them as the ‘summing up and review of a whole series of self-dissections’, and thus, like the diary,

⁴⁸ Charles Jackson (ed.), *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Surtees Society, lxxv, Durham, 1875), 165-6.

⁴⁹ Andrew Cambers (ed.), *The Life of John Rastrick, 1650-1727* (Camden 5th ser., xxxvi, London, 2010), 51-52.

⁵⁰ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), cited in Lynch, *Autobiography*, 12.

they were an instrument of introspection and self-knowledge. It was often the case that the spiritual autobiographer drew on their diary as a means of compiling their ‘spiritual case-study’.⁵¹ They tended to follow a formula, tracing their spiritual journey retrospectively through the stages of conversion: election, vocation, humiliation, contrition, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification.⁵² The ‘map for the spiritual geography of the soul’, to which these terms belonged, was developed by late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century writers, such as William Perkins (1558-1602).⁵³ The writer used this ‘geography’ to identify the moment of their assurance, and it was from this position that the conversion narrative would be written. For example, Lynch describes how for Rose Thurgood this came as a ‘sweet Flash’ coming over her heart on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot. The conversion was a ‘teleological form’ because emphasis was placed on the end of the narrative, on the ‘sweet Flash’.⁵⁴ The popularity of this ‘template’ may have emerged as a result of puritanism being ‘driven underground’ following the Restoration. The way that the autobiographies followed a narrative template meant that they demonstrated an inherently collective dimension, which served as a consolidation of identity and sociability during those challenging years for the godly community.⁵⁵

Like the diary, the spiritual autobiography was a record of the operations of divine providence in a life. When Rokeby wrote ‘I doe now set up this monument’ in his diary, he was set upon recording God’s providences in serial form, observing and accounting what he perceived of God’s presence in his daily life. Each day brought renewed observations and remembrances, to be re-read as a source of spiritual

⁵¹ G. A. Starr, *Defoe & Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ, 1965), 6.

⁵² Webster, ‘Writing’, 43.

⁵³ See D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), ch. 1, at 37, see also 35-38 regarding Perkins.

⁵⁴ Lynch, *Autobiography*, 11, 15, ch. 3 (which compares several conversion narratives).

⁵⁵ Cambers, ‘Reading, the Godly’, 815.

reflection. In a spiritual autobiography there would often be an early chapter tracing the follies and sins of the writer's youth, followed by marking the point at which they became more serious about religion. Their previous observations of providence were then reviewed into themed categories and arranged in a compilation much like the collections of cautionary tales and deliverances that the writers would have been encountered, such as Thomas Beard's *Theatres of Judgements*, Samuel Clarke's *Mirror or Looking-Glasse for both Saints and Sinners* (1646) or later, Increase Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (Boston, 1684).⁵⁶ These deliverances could be surveyed through a whole, coherent narration, through chapter headings and annotations which guided the reader through the nature and meaning of those providences to the writer. The number of these sources increased in the latter half of the seventeenth century, to which we will now turn.

At this point a pause is helpful. This section has established that the seventeenth century saw the proliferation of diaries and autobiographies, and an intensification of the 'itch to record'. To an extent we can use modern definitions to think about these texts, but it is important to realise that they did not conform to formal or generic boundaries in the way that modern autobiographical texts do. Early modern self-writers were improvisers and often wrote accounts with the intention of achieving something else. This is how the spiritual diary emerged and why it became the predominant type of seventeenth-century first-person account; godly individuals, intent on the practice of introspection, needed an instrument and so followed the advice and templates of their ministers and canonical texts to record their sins and self-

⁵⁶ See exploration of these texts in Walsham, *Providence*. Examples include Anthony Munday, *A View of Sundry Examples* (1580); Philip Stubbes *Two Wunderfull and Rare Examples* 1581) and *A Christal Glasse for Christian women* (1591); Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (1597); William Turner, *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences* (1697); Samuel Clarke, *A Mirrour or Looking-Glasse For Saints, and Sinners* (1646); and later, Increase Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (Boston, 1684).

examinations in a journal. These spiritual diaries were as much a tool for introspection in the act of re-reading as they were of writing. Most importantly, they were the space in which individuals could enact their exercise of providentialism, which is why this exploration of the spiritual diary is important context for this thesis. As will be demonstrated, individuals were influenced by the spiritual diary even if they had additional or alternative motivations for writing. But that influence was manifest in how they also exercised their belief in providence within the pages of diaries, reviews, and remembrances.

This section will now turn to the period studied in this thesis, *c.* 1660-1720. It will look at how the spiritual diary and autobiography influenced self-writers who had other, or additional, reasons for recording their lives. It will also survey who was writing a first-person account in this period, and why they were writing (and who for). In conjunction with the account of the spiritual diary above, this section then provides a more detailed backdrop for the writers appearing in the chapters that follow.

To get a sense of the breadth of self-writing in this period it would be tempting to follow Delany's example and separate secular and religious accounts.⁵⁷ As he acknowledged, however, this would always be a difficult task considering that most seventeenth-century writers held some kind of religious belief, were immersed in a religious national culture, and were probably consuming religious literature to some degree. Nevertheless, in the life-writing of the seventeenth century – including biography, hagiography, character sketches and epistolary collections here – it is possible to discern a partition between classical and Christian influences and forms, those in which 'men strut, shove, and butt horns, and the closet in which they kneel to

⁵⁷ Delany, *Autobiography*, 3-4.

beg forgiveness of their sins'. This partition can also be seen within the same document, where the author slips 'back and forth between classical and Christian moral frames'.⁵⁸ This observation by Debora Shuger highlights the cross-fertilization between ideas and traits in these texts and how they could serve more than one purpose, which helps us to see how the diary-keeping practices of the hotter sort of protestant might be adapted by other writers who were writing for purposes beyond spiritual exercise.⁵⁹

William Haller implied the influence of the spiritual diary on more 'mainstream' Protestants when he suggested that 'the greatest diary sprung from the puritan confessional'; that of Samuel Pepys, which was begun some four years after John Fuller published John Beadle's *Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian* (1656), the work developed from his 1630s sermon that recommended the spiritual journal.⁶⁰ Pepys may or may not have read that work, and there are many interpretations as to why he kept his diary. But while there are sermon notes and critique reminiscent of a spiritual diary, the rather earthy report of his social and political life does not correlate with the typical spiritual diary as discussed above.⁶¹ This well-known example serves to remind us that some writers wrote about their relationship with God and their religious practices, but not exclusively, and their writing awarded equal attention to

⁵⁸ Debora Shuger, 'Life-Writing in Seventeenth-Century England', in Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis and Jill Kowalik (eds.), *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Cambridge, 2000), 73-4.

⁵⁹ See also the influence of spiritual autobiographical texts beyond self-writing as discussed in Starr, *Defoe*.

⁶⁰ Haller, *Puritanism*, 97; Sangha, 'Documents', 110, 126.

⁶¹ On Pepys's diaries see Robert Latham and William Matthews (eds.) *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 11 vols. (1970-83; reprinted 1995); Claire Tomalin, *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* (London, 2002); Harry Berger, 'The Pepys Show: Ghost-Writing and Documentary Desire in the Diary', *English Literary History*, 65 (1998), 557-91; Mark S. Dawson, 'Histories and Texts: Refiguring the Diary of Samuel Pepys', *HJ*, 43, 2 (2000), 407-31; M. Stein, 'A Psychoanalytic View of Mental Health: Samuel Pepys and His Diary', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 46 (1977), 82-115; Randy Robertson, 'Censors of the Mind: Samuel Pepys and the Restoration Licensers', *The Dalhousie Review*, 85 (2005), 181-94; John H. O'Neill, 'Samuel Pepys: The War of Will and Pleasure', *Restoration*, 19 (1995), 88-94.

the other facets of their lives. This example and Haller's suggestion also reflect Olney's observation that 'autobiography as a literary mode emerged from autobiography as a confessional practice'.⁶² This means that spiritual autobiographical texts influenced writers who adapted that type, and in their accounts we can gradually see more detail that is personal rather than what only resulted from their inward, spiritual scrutiny.

From the Restoration onwards, we can therefore see many diaries, reviews, commonplace books, and published lives that share traits with the spiritual diary, such as the recording of providences. Unlike the spiritual diary, however, these texts juxtapose the observing, accounting and remembering of providences with other details of their life, such as their business and political interests, relationships and intrigues, and intellectual pursuits. An example is the diary of the Rye merchant Samuel Jeake (1652-99), who features in chapter 5 of this study. Jeake's diary was influenced by 'the tradition of autobiographical writing associated with the Puritans', and is remarkable because it weaves together Jeake's health and business concerns with his astrological investigations and providential observations.⁶³ Jeake came from a nonconformist background and he lists the books he had read as a young man; these include canonical texts that established the use of spiritual diaries for introspection. Jeake had then adapted the spiritual diary to reflect how his life and interests had taken a different shape to his father's and grandparents', and to accommodate his study of astrology. His diary therefore demonstrates how change was reflected in the practice

⁶² James Olney, 'Autobiography and the Cultural Moment', in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, 13, quoted in Amelang, *Flight of Icarus*, 14.

⁶³ Michael Hunter and Annabel Gregory (eds.), *An Astrological Diary of the Seventeenth Century: Samuel Jeake of Rye 1652-1699* (Oxford, 1988), 1.

of self-writing and that texts were moulded to fit changing priorities, interests and concepts.

Having discussed the influence of the spiritual diary-writing, we can now build a sense of who was being influenced, or, who was writing a diary or autobiography in this period. This requires a preliminary visit to William Matthews's 1950 annotated bibliography. The value Matthews attached to diaries is reflected in his comment on biographies, where 'only the Worthies are embalmed: the farm laborer, the dull wastrel, the town councilor, merit no biography'. In diaries, however, 'even the unworthy and the unwashed' appear, and 'scepter and crown are level with shovel and spade'.⁶⁴ Consequently, he considered the source material as uniquely rich for social historians, reflecting that the 'soul of social history' can only be found in their pages.⁶⁵

The majority of self-writers in this period were from the middling or upper ranks of society, and among them one can find merchants, textile-workers, apprentices and shopkeepers, local officers, surgeons and sailors, heiresses and widows.⁶⁶ Many scholars, antiquarians, clergymen and ministers also feature.⁶⁷ Delany argues that this

⁶⁴ Matthews, *British Diaries*, viii.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Useful collections include E. Graham, H. Hinds and H. Wilcox (eds.), *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London, 1989), and Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.), *English Family Life, 1576-1716* (Oxford, 1988). For individual diarists meeting these descriptions see Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*; Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds, MSS 8-10, 'Diaries of Joseph Bufton'; William L. Sachse (ed.), *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-1674* (London, 1938); David Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of a Village Shopkeeper, 1754-1765* (London, 1998); J. E. Foster (ed.), *The Diary of Samuel Newton Alderman of Cambridge (1662-1717)* (Cambridge, 1890); Craig Horner (ed.), *The Diary of Edmund Harrold, Wigmaker of Manchester 1712-15* (Aldershot, 2008); Edmund Hobhouse (ed.), *The Diary of a West Country Physician A. D. 1684-1726* (London, 1934); F. N. L. Poynter (ed.), *The Journal of James Yonge, Plymouth Surgeon [1647-1721]* (London, 1963); Basil Lubbock (ed.), *Barlow's Journal: Of His Life at Sea in King's Ships, East & West Indiamen & Other Merchantmen from 1659 to 1703* (London, 1934); Raymond A. Anselment (ed.), *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke, 1671-1714* (Camden Society, 5th Ser., xviii, Cambridge, 2001); Katherine O. Acheson (ed.), *The Diary of Anne Clifford, 1616-1619: A Critical Edition* (New York, 1995).

⁶⁷ Joseph Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S., Author of the Topography of Leeds (1677-1724)*, 2 vols. (London, 1830); C. Jackson (ed.), *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary* (Surtees Soc. Pub., liv, Durham, 1869); E. S. de Beer (ed.), *The Diary of John Evelyn*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1955); C. E. Doble (ed.), *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne* 11 vols. (Oxford, 1885-1921); C. H. Josten (ed.), *Elias Ashmole (1617-1692): His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, His*

representation amongst the middling sorts is not indicative of the ‘developing fortunes of a specific class’, but rather the ‘unprecedented general social mobility of the period’. Amongst the ranks of spiritual diarists, for example, he points to the way that all men were ‘equal candidates for salvation’, and thus were spurred into keeping the instrument of introspection.⁶⁸ Elaine Mckay’s study of the occupational and geographical distribution of 372 diaries reveals that the most frequently represented group amongst English diarists was clergymen, followed closely by government officials, and then by sailors, politicians and scholars. Given that the social status of the authors necessarily correlates with the levels of written literacy and provision of education at the time, the representation amongst officials and clergymen comes as no surprise.⁶⁹ There was representation, however, amongst merchants and the middling sort, which appears to bear out both Matthews’s and Delany’s observations about the relative variety of voices to be found amongst the ranks of self-writers, and Amelang’s observation that the period saw the rise not only of autobiography, but ‘the rise of *popular* autobiography’.⁷⁰ While access to the lower orders through these sources is

Correspondence, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1966); William Stukeley, *The Commentaries, Diary, & Common-place Book of William Stukeley & Selected Letters* (London, 1980); Andrew Clark (ed.), *The Life and Time of Anthony Wood*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1891-1907); Doreen Slatter, *The Diary of Thomas Naish* (Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Soc., xx, Devizes, 1964); John Beresford (ed.), *The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758-1802*, 5 vols. (London, 1924-31); Ruth Bird (ed.), *The Journal of Giles Moore* (Sussex Record Society, lxxviii, Lewes, 1971); Matthew Storey (ed.), *Two East Anglian Diaries, 1641-1729* (Woodbridge, 1994); ‘The Diary of the Rev. John Thomlinson’, in John Crawford Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries* (Surtees Soc., cxvii, London, 1910); Charles Severn (ed.), *Diary of the Rev. John Ward, A. M., Vicar of Stratford Upon-Avon, Extending from 1648 to 1679* (London, 1839); Harry Gill and Everard L. Guilford (eds.), *The Rector’s Book Clayworth Notts* (Nottingham, 1910).

⁶⁸ Delany, *Autobiography*, 17-23.

⁶⁹ R.A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800* (1988; 2nd. ed. London, 2002); D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), 187-191, 194-9.

⁷⁰ Amelang, *Flight of Icarus*, 11.

limited, there are voices to be found other than those of the male, upper echelons of early modern society.⁷¹

The most significant of these other voices is that of women, and these have been brought to the foreground in recent years. Women's, gender historians and literary scholars have been at the vanguard of research on autobiographical texts since the 1960s.⁷² Their study of female writers has been vital work because the autobiographical genre is implicitly bound up with gender, as its subject has for many years been assumed to be Western, middle-class, and male.⁷³ The tradition of publishing lives of 'great men' created a canon of texts, particularly by antiquarians during the nineteenth century, which then formed the basis of research in the following century. Indeed, some of these nineteenth-century editions, such as those by Joseph Hunter (1783-1861), feature in this study and very indebted it is to them for the

⁷¹ Elaine McKay, 'English Diarists: Gender, Geography and Occupation, 1500-1700', *History*, 90 (2005), 191-212, cited in Sangha, 'Documents', 113.

⁷² Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle, 'Recent Studies in Early Modern English Life Writing', *English Literary Renaissance*, 40, 1 (2010), 132-162, especially 137-140 is a helpful introduction to this field. See also Mary G. Mason, 'The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers', in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, 207-35; E. C. Jelinek (ed.), *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (London, 1980), and *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present* (Boston, 1986); Moira Montheith (ed.), *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory* (Brighton, 1986); H. Wilcox and L. Stewart, "'Why hath this woman writ her own life?': Studying Early Female Autobiography", in A. Thompson and H. Wilcox (eds.), *Teaching Women: Feminism and English Studies* (Manchester, 1989); 'Introduction' in Graham, Hinds and Wilcox (eds.), *Her Own Life*; H. Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1988); Elspeth Graham, 'Women's Writing and the Self', in Helen Wilcox (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1996), 209-33; Susan Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006); Paul Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing* (Oxford, 2006); Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge, 2006); Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (eds.), *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2007); Effie Botonaki, *Seventeenth-Century English Women's Autobiographical Writings: Disclosing Enclosures* (Lewiston, NY, 2004) and 'Early Modern Women's Diaries and Closets: 'Chambers of choice Mercies and beloved retirement'', in Dan Doll and Jessica Munns (eds.), *Recording and Reordering: Essays on the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Diary and Journal* (Lewisburg, PA, 2006), 43-64; Avra Kouffman, 'Women's Diaries of Late Stuart England; An Overview', in Doll and Munns (eds.), *Recording and Reordering*, 65-101; Kim Walker, "'Busie in my clositt': Letters, Diaries, and Autobiographical Writing", in *idem.* (ed.), *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York, 1996), 26-46; Sandra Findley and Elaine Hobby, 'Seventeenth-Century Women's Autobiography', in Francis Barker et al (eds.), *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century* (Univ. of Essex, 1981), 11-36.

⁷³ Anderson, *Autobiography*, 3.

resources they provide.⁷⁴ But the canonical written life by men of letters has made way for the acknowledgement and historiographical presence of women as authors and subjects of self-writing.⁷⁵ For example, Effie Botonaki's study of Englishwomen's spiritual diaries illustrates how the predominantly male activity of writing allowed women to 'slip into forbidden shoes: those of the male spiritual guide, merchant, and lawyer', which constituted a 'liberation' from the confines of their gendered roles and conduct.⁷⁶

The last point of discussion in this section concerns why writers wrote diaries and autobiographies – why they got the 'journalistic itch'.⁷⁷ The numbers of personal accounts increases considerably in the later seventeenth century, which raises questions about why and for whom these authors were writing. Some of these questions are answered more easily than others. A prominent drive to record was to improve oneself in a spiritual diary or in a document influenced by its precedent. It should be acknowledged at the outset, however, that there was not always the deep-seated compulsion to record as demonstrated by godly figures like Nehemiah Wallington. Thomas Isham (b. 1656/7), for example, began keeping a diary as a boy at the request of his father. He wrote it entirely in Latin as an educational exercise in return for £6 a year from his father.⁷⁸

Most accounts reflect the occupation or lifestyle of their writer, which is why the diaries of the period have been characterised by 'theme'. There are travel and sea

⁷⁴ Joseph Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Cartwright, Bishop of Chester* (Camden Soc., old ser., xxii, London, 1843); *Diary of Ralph Thoresby*.

⁷⁵ Trev Lynn Broughton, *Men of Letters, Writing Lives; Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late Victoria Period* (London, 1999), 8.

⁷⁶ Botonaki, 'Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries', 21.

⁷⁷ Webster, 'Writing', 40.

⁷⁸ Gyles Isham (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Isham of Lamport (1658-81) kept by him in Latin from 1671 to 1673 at his Father's command*, trans. Norman Marlow (Farnborough, 1971).

diaries, such as that of Edward Barlow (b.1642), William Dampier (1651-1715), Woodes Rogers (1679-1732) and Celia Fiennes (1662-1741).⁷⁹ There are political diaries, detailing the workings of the court or those in civil positions; these have been characterised by historians as more ‘secular’ works.⁸⁰ There were also combinations of themes, such as the medical, sea journal of Plymouth naval surgeon James Yonge (1647-1721), the medical, meteorological, farming and spiritual journal of Derbyshire nonconformist minister James Clegg (1679-1755), or the social, medical diary of West Country physician and musician Claver Morris (1659-1727).⁸¹ The ‘why’ behind the personal account, however, cannot be wholly attributable to the theme of the text, nor necessarily to the occupation or lifestyle of the writer, else there would have been numerous accounts before the early modern period. Rather, it has been suggested that the itch to record lay in a desire, heightened in seventeenth-century England, to be a witness to events and to create a chronicle of those experiences.⁸² This can be seen in how even Isham, writing under financial enticement, managed alongside accounts of his shooting and gaming to comment with relish on what ‘we heard’ of national events.⁸³

The striking aspect of this idea of personal accounts as first-person chronicles is that it implies the writers had an intended audience in mind. Of course, every piece of writing has an implied audience, even if that audience is only a future version of the

⁷⁹ Lubbock, *Barlow's Journal*; William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* (1720) and John Masefield (ed.), *Dampier's Voyages*, 2 vols. (London, 1906); Woodes Rogers, *Life Aboard a British Privateer* (1712; London, 1889); R. W. Blencowe (ed.), *Through England on a Side-Saddle* (London, 1888); re-ed. from MS (London, 1948). See also Sangha, ‘Documents’, 110, 112.

⁸⁰ For example, diary of York governor and Aldborough MP Sir John Reresby, A. Browning (ed.), *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, (Glasgow, 1936; London, 1991). For more see Delany, *Autobiography*, 107-157.

⁸¹ Poynter, *James Yonge*; Vanessa S. Doe (ed.), *The Diary of James Clegg of Chapel en le Frith*, 3 vols. (Derbyshire Record Soc., Chesterfield, 1978-81); Hobhouse, *West Country Physician*.

⁸² Delany, *Autobiography*, 8-11.

⁸³ Isham, *Thomas Isham*.

writer or God. But amongst the many diaries and written lives of the period there appears to be an unprecedented concern for ‘posterity’. Even those diaries which we expect to be composed in utmost secrecy demonstrate an awareness of how the document may be perceived by external eyes. Consideration of the relative privacy or publicity of these documents must therefore feature in any examination of why these texts were created.

For example, Rokeby’s diary appears to be a secret or private document because he asks that it remain that way in his preface. However, the very fact that he included such an instruction suggests that his diary was written with an awareness that it may be read; why else preface his writing with the instruction ‘This is not to be divulged’? Divulging a secret cannot be imagined without a prospective receiver of said secret. A similar request to the reader was made by Edmund Bohun (1645-1697) in his initial address:

If by chance you look into this book (which, during my life, no one shall do with my consent) I would have you interpret candidly whatever you meet with. For I write this for myself alone, not for others. And in Latin, lest my servants should pry into it. In a rude, nay barbarous, style, perhaps, full of faults and grammatical errors. I care nothing about this. The subject, not the language, is my aim. You do not understand me, say you? Nor do I wish it. If you turn off your eyes altogether I will thank you. Farewell.⁸⁴

Common sense might suggest that if anything can be taken to be a secret or private diary then surely this is, seeing as it has both linguistic safeguards and warnings against prying eyes. Those safeguards and warnings, however, prevent us from accepting Bohun’s diary as the utterances of a private heart; he was evidently concerned with how he would be perceived and thus his ‘private’ testimony was anchored in an apprehension of the weight of posterity. Clergyman Giles Moore

⁸⁴ S. Rix (ed.), *The Diary and Autobiography of Edmund Bohun Esq.* (Beccles, 1853), xxxvii.

(1617-79) was more explicit still, pleading that ‘If you (my successor) read these writings, as I pray that they may be read, I hope also that you will read them indulgently’.⁸⁵

We cannot therefore assume that a diary portrays the privacy of an internal world; diaries could be written in the conceit of (internal) secrecy, with an eye to (external) posterity – whether to a real contemporary readership, or imagined, or simply for later contemplation. Even Wallington, who wrote, prayed and meditated alone in solitude very early in the morning and whose practice consequently appears to be wholly private, was exceptional amongst the earlier spiritual diarists in his addressing his notebooks ‘to the Christian Reader’, which Booy argues suggests their ‘wider instructive function’.⁸⁶

Many texts demonstrate an awareness of future audiences more openly, and in some a wider function is literally visible. The spiritual ‘life’ of John Rastrick was constructed out of his diary entries and is a manuscript complete with drafted front cover, as though prepared for a printer. The cover alludes to a high degree of textual consciousness and suggests he has readied the text for readers.⁸⁷ One of Rastrick’s acquaintances, minister William Bilby, wrote *Some Remarkable Passages in my Life*, and included *An Appendix to ye former Narrative Containing Some more remarkable Passages in my life in ye Sevl stages to wch providence brought me*.⁸⁸ Like Rastrick, he collated his life’s content for optimum perusal. Both appear to have manufactured their manuscript lives in such a way that ensured their readiness for a reader, an action

⁸⁵ Bird, *Giles Moore*, 354.

⁸⁶ Booy, *Notebooks*, 10-11, 23-24.

⁸⁷ See Fig.1 in Cambers, *John Rastrick*, 26.

⁸⁸ C. G. Bolam, ‘Some remarkable passages in the life of William Bilby’, *Transactions of Unitarian Historical Society*, 10, 3 (1953), 123-141; University of Nottingham Library, Nottingham, MS 140, ‘Autobiographical volume by William Bilby (1664-1738)’.

that correlates with the ‘scribal publishing’ described by Cambers as facets of ‘internalization and externalization’. Thus, the diaries from which these lives were composed were potentially written with an eye to a future function beyond the immediate instrumental function of introspection.⁸⁹

The textual consciousness exhibited by writers like Rastrick and Bilby extended into the pages of diaries, too. An example can be seen in the volumes of Ralph Thoresby’s diaries (1658-1725), which are complete with indexes. Each index addresses a different aspect of his life; some are references to people and places, some are of sermon notes, others are personal events and providences.⁹⁰ It could be that he compiled these when he began writing his *Review* in 1710, for which he consulted his past accounts. The *Review* tells us that the indexes feature in volumes that were ‘written up’ from his earlier material: ‘I thought it more conducive to my humiliation for sin to review my former life, as far as I could retrieve any memorials thereof, and to transcribe my diary ... from loose and scattered papers into a book to render them more usefull to me’.⁹¹ The indexes were therefore probably a tool in his general practice of re-reading. As a spiritual diarist, Thoresby would have undertaken the common practice of re-reading, particularly at the arrival of a new year or anniversaries of family deaths or personal events. The indexes facilitated this practice and allowed for occasional perusal with satisfyingly ordered ease. Thoresby was an antiquarian with a penchant for collecting, collating, ordering and quantifying knowledge. He wrote the first history of the city of Leeds, *Ducatus Leodiensis* (1715),

⁸⁹ Cambers, ‘Reading, the Godly’, 802, 823.

⁹⁰ YAS, MSS 21-25, ‘Diaries of Ralph Thoresby’; YML, Add MS 21, ‘Diary of Ralph Thoresby’; Hunter (ed.), *Diary of Ralph Thoresby*; Peter Meredith (ed.), *The Thoresby Society’s Ducatus Tercentenary*, 2 vols. (Leeds, 2015), ii, 3-22.

⁹¹ Meredith, *Ducatus Tercentenary*, ii, 7.

and a history of the church of Leeds, *Vicaria Leodiensis* (1724).⁹² He also turned his Leeds home into a museum, *Musaeum Thoresbyanum*, opening his collection of coins, curiosities and archaeological finds to other antiquarians. It would be tempting to characterise him as a collector and curator, and to view the reading ‘apparatus’ he constructed in his self-writings as a reflection of that impulse. He appears to have gathered and collated his experiences and memories, making them ordered and accessible.

Thoresby’s example is an interesting one because his identity as a godly antiquarian, diarist and autobiographer encourages us to think about what lies behind this desire to create a chronicle. Immediately ‘chronicle’ implies an investigation, followed by a setting down of history, which considering his antiquarianism makes perfect sense. His ‘collecting’ impulse was not unique, however. At the opening of the diary of Sir William Dugdale, antiquary and Norroy King of Arms, one finds an intonation of Sir Thomas Browne’s words ‘Tis time to observe occurrences, and let nothing remarkable escape us’.⁹³ These words had a totemic-like truth about them, for this is precisely what generations of antiquarians sought to achieve.⁹⁴ Delany argues that it was the combination of the recording of history from a ‘strictly personal viewpoint’ with the ‘natural egotism’ of the writer, that chronicles became autobiographies. It might be that the reverse was also true: that the impulse to self-

⁹² Ralph Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis, or, The Topography of ... Leedes* (1715); *Vicaria Leodiensis, or, The History of the Church of Leedes* (1724). See also D. H. Atkinson, *Ralph Thoresby, the Topographer* 2 vols. (Leeds, 1885-7).

⁹³ Sir Thomas Browne’s *Epistle Dedicatory to Hydriotaphia* (1658), quoted in William Hamper (ed.), *The Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale, Knight, Sometime Garter Principal of Arms with an Appendix* (London, 1827), 43.

⁹⁴ See D. C. Douglas, *English Scholars* (London, 1939); John Considine, *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe: Lexicography and the Making of Heritage* (Cambridge, 2008); Theodor Harmsen, *Antiquarianism in the Augustan Age: Thomas Hearne, 1678-1735* (Oxford, 2000); Stuart Piggott, *Essays in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism* (Edinburgh, 1976), *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination* (London, 1989); Angus Vine, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2010).

record coincided with the itch to record everything.⁹⁵ For example, Ralph Josselin (1617-83), vicar of Earls Colne, Essex, kept a spiritual diary and witnessed the tumultuous civil war years. He recorded events, such as, ‘this weeke ... I was much troubled with the blacke providence of putting the King to death, my teares were not restrained at the passages about his death’.⁹⁶ Also, even amidst the sporadic entries of Edmund Harrold’s diary there are detailed entries recording the occurrences in Manchester during the Jacobite Rebellion in 1715.⁹⁷ What these and many other examples suggest is that the chronicle could become the recorded life, as Delany suggests, but also that the self-writer looked outwards, too, with a desire to set down history as they experienced it, and to write themselves into public events.⁹⁸

If we reflect on Marc Bloch’s observation that ‘Christianity is a religion of historians’, and the influential role of spiritual diarists – themselves avid consumers of *the* core historical text, the Bible - then perhaps this desire to set down a record of events sounds increasingly likely.⁹⁹ It does not necessarily mean that they were addressing all humankind in their self-writing, but it might suggest that they wanted to communicate these important events to those who were important to them; as discussed above, we know that the circulation of diaries in godly communities was common.

Sometimes these writers tell us exactly who they had in mind. At the age of ‘threescore years and ten’ the Dean of Ripon Heneage Dering (1665-1750) began writing ‘a survey of all those stages that have led to it’, in order to ‘read over my life... [and] consider with myself how I have lived it.’ In so doing he demonstrated an

⁹⁵ Delany, *Autobiography*, 8-11.

⁹⁶ Macfarlane, *Diary of Ralph Josselin*, 155.

⁹⁷ Horner, *Diary*, 121-22.

⁹⁸ Delany, *Autobiography*, 10-11.

⁹⁹ Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (1954; Manchester, 1992), 4, 26.

awareness of his position in a genealogy of other ‘pilgrims’, and that ‘perhaps some of my children may hereafter please themselves with this little history of their father’s pilgrimage.’ He described the content of the piece as ‘little and private’, and that if any strangers read them and were ‘inclined to smile at them, let him consider that they were intended for a very serious purpose’.¹⁰⁰ Dering was addressing his own little corner of posterity with a pilgrim’s story that was to be put to good use. Rastrick was doing something similar, leaving instructions to his son to ensure all his children received a copy of the narrative, but with some conditions: ‘yet I desire and charge you that it be not wrote as you find it here in my Name of first person singular; but that, you compose a Narrative out of it your Self in the third person,’ and for him to omit content that ‘whatsoever may be thought indecent’.¹⁰¹ Like Dering, Rastrick was addressing his corner of posterity, but with substantial concerns about being judged ill by it.

Yorkshireman James Fretwell went a step further. He wrote *A Family History Begun by James Fretwell*, which contains a self-written account not dissimilar to what Dering or Rastrick attempted, compiled from his diaries. His account was ‘of the present circumstances of myself and my father’s house’, designed to be ‘a bequest to posterity’. ‘I shall not be so exact in methodizing every part as it were designed for public view’, he wrote in 1728/9, and ‘I am conscious of my own defects, and therefore what you find here I desire you will not communicate to any except near and dear friends, who may perhaps bear with me, not looking so much at the poor performance, as at my sincere endeavours of pleasing and profiting posterity, which is and shall be the sincere desire of your loving relation, and affectionate friend, whilst known by the

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, *Yorkshire Diaries*, 333.

¹⁰¹ Cambers, *John Rastrick*, 27.

name of James Fretwell'.¹⁰² His concern to 'please' as well as 'profit' posterity perhaps illustrates his wish to be an exemplary godly figure *and* to entertain an audience. The implication here is that diaries did not necessarily serve an 'of-the-moment' private function, that they could be written with a specific audience in mind, and that their writers could be deeply concerned with how posterity would receive them.

It is likely these writers' anxiety about exposing their private lives and thoughts, and of achieving the right reception, was brought on by an awareness of the widening field of popular, accessible works of life-writing available in both manuscript and print. Within small communities, particularly of antiquarians like Thoresby, manuscript personal accounts were circulated and copied. Thoresby, for example, made a copy of the life of Rev. John Shaw, vicar of Rotherham (1608-1672), transcripts from the diaries of Dr Tobie Matthewes, Archbishop of York, and notes from the diaries of Dr Henry Sampson, minister.¹⁰³ Much like Rastrick and Dering, Shaw had apprehended a readership, addressing his son at the beginning of his autobiography, considering it 'in duty to God' that I 'acquaint you withal ... [and] leave behind me for your use a few words that may give you some knowledge of me, and of the lineage whence you are descended'.¹⁰⁴ Shaw annotated his manuscript, comments to which Thoresby's added remarks regarding the manuscript's provenance, for example, 'Memorandum: This is transcribed verbatim from the said manuscript, which was corrected and interlined in several places by the said Mr. Shaw

¹⁰² Jackson, *Yorkshire Diaries*, 165-7.

¹⁰³ See John Shawe, *Mistris Shawe's Tomb-Stone: or, the Saints Remains* (London, 1658); Jackson, *Yorkshire Diaries*, ix, 119-162; BL, Add MS 4460, 'Transcripts in the autograph of Ralph Thoresby'; 'The day-books of Dr Henry Sampson', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 2nd ser., 35 (1851), 381-2, and 36 (1851), 11-17.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, *Yorkshire Diaries*, 121-122.

himself'.¹⁰⁵ Ever the conscientious antiquary, Thoresby wanted to secure the air of authenticity to the copy.

The posthumous fate of one's personal account was thus left in the hands of future generations. Some were 'scribally published', as Shaw's was, others were printed to serve as an aid for the edification of future generations.¹⁰⁶ Family members would often open the piece with a sketch of the writer, their life and habits, and most often, their piety. This can be seen in the life of Elizabeth Bury, from Clare in Suffolk, who kept a diary 1693-1720, which was then anthologised by her husband the year she died. Similarly, Hannah Housman, a pious woman from Kidderminster, would have her diary posthumously published by her brother, Richard Pearsall, and Housman's brother-in-law Joseph Williams's diary was published by an 'intimate friend'.¹⁰⁷ Pearsall's preface to his sister Housman's 'life' is intriguing:

The ancient Egyptians embalmed the Bodies of their deceased Relations, and thus preserving them from Putrefaction, placed them standing upright in their Sepulchres or Houses; that by often viewing them they might be put in mind of their Virtues in order to a pious Imitation. This is the Reason that I have attempted to embalm this excellent Person, that you might have her in your Houses, view her ... follow her ... trace her ... amidst the various Providences that attended her, prosperous and adverse, in order to an Assimilation.¹⁰⁸

Housman's 'life' was published in 1744, considerably later than the sources considered so far. It is clearly presented for public consumption, an 'embalmed' entity ready to enter into readers' homes. The extent to which writers were conscious of the publication and consumption of their work by this time is demonstrated by how Joseph

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 161-2.

¹⁰⁶ Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly', 823. See also John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes Towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1986), 21.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel Bury, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Elizabeth Bury* (1720); B. Fawcett, *Extracts from the Diary, Meditations and Letters of Mr. Joseph Williams of Kidderminster, who died December 21, 1755, aged 63* (1779), 4.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Pearsall, *The Power and Pleasure of the Divine Life: Exemplify'd in the Late Mrs. Housman, of Kidderminster, Worcestershire. As extracted from her own papers* (1744), xvii-xviii.

Williams' widow refused to release his diaries while she lived. Joseph had written his first copy of the diary in shorthand, indecipherable by his family, but had produced an 'abridgement' of it in long hand for the express use of his children and descendants. It was this long-hand version that was eventually released some twenty-two years after his death by his last surviving daughter. He had thus written a quasi-private piece from which he could later lift a presentable piece for wider consumption.¹⁰⁹ Needless to say, writing a diary for the purpose of introspection had become a rather more complicated exercise by this later period, and perhaps without realising it some were composing a chronicle whether they liked it or not. More than ever the first-person account was being 'modelled from the outside, not just written from the insides'.¹¹⁰ For some authors, writing a personal account had become a process of collecting oneself, of embalming and memorializing one's experiences. In a sense, then, writers were creating a monument.

This last discussion of the 'journalistic itch' has thus brought us full circle, back to where this chapter began: with Rokeby and his 'monument'. The ground covered by this section has been extensive. It has explained modern and early modern conceptualisations of autobiography and diary, focussing particularly on the fluidity of early modern first-person accounts. It has traced the emergence and proliferation of the spiritual diary in the seventeenth century, and how this 'predominant type' of text later influenced writers who adapted that type to suit their concerns. This section then examined who was writing an account like this in *c.* 1660-*c.* 1720, namely the men and women of the middling and upper ranks of society, and then why and for whom. It

¹⁰⁹ Fawcett, *Extracts*, iii, v.

¹¹⁰ Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly', 824.

became clear that diaries were not necessarily ‘of-the-moment’ texts and were potentially designed for a wider contemporary readership or for later contemplation.

Consequently, we can say that self-writing in this period reflected the desire for introspection and self-knowledge, designed for recording historical experience and preserving memories for posterity. All in all, it appears that first-person accounts reflected a preoccupation with memory, with collecting, collating and recollecting experience. This is an important finding because it demonstrates the correlation between self-writing and providentialism. Providential belief was exercised by observing, accounting and remembering, methods that are mirrored in the composition of a first-person account. This suggests that self-writing could facilitate the exercise of providentialism in a space that was inherently subjective, meaning that in the pages of these sources we can find how providence was subjectively experienced.

2.2. Self-Writing as a Creative Act of Memory

This thesis uses ‘self-writing’ in place of ‘autobiography’ or ‘life-writing’ to avoid the complexities of ‘autobiography’ and ‘diary’ referred to in the previous section, and because it is a simple shorthand for describing the writing of self in a first-person account. Self is undoubtedly connected to autobiographical writing, and this section will explain that relationship. This is important because it will be argued that the exercise of providentialism, as it was enacted through self-writing, provoked distinct modes of feeling and informed perceptions of self. The process by which self is constructed in these texts therefore needs to be qualified. The section will look at how the theoretical relationship between self and autobiographical texts was established, and then at the direction scholarship has taken more recently. It will conclude by

detailing the conceptualisation used throughout the thesis of how self was constructed in these texts.

For as long as there has been antiquarian interest towards them, diaries have been valued for their personal quality and how they provide a spyglass into past lives. The imitation of calendar time in diaries creates the perception of proximity to the subject, and a feeling of intimacy. In his 1843 edition of Thomas Cartwright's diaries Joseph Hunter described the text as 'merely a recital of occurrences, many of no importance, written down with a hasty and careless pen, day by day'.¹¹¹ Here Hunter was referring to the 'everydayness' of Cartwright's account. Perhaps this was to manage the readers' expectations; when reading a serial narrative form like this we cannot expect to see a life as whole and coherent, but rather as a fragmented, sequential existence corralled into diurnal parcels, formed and re-formed with each entry.¹¹² Perhaps, though, his comment instead reflected the value he perceived in the source, in how a careless daily record could act as a window onto the subject's personal mundanity. Through his 'hasty and careless' remarks, the reader could observe Cartwright in his everyday attitude, completing daily tasks and meeting daily challenges. Seemingly, the diary could give the reader a glimpse into a secret, interior world.

We get a sense of Hunter's attitude towards his subjects and what he felt he could access through the diaries when he intoned the words of Thomas Fuller: 'Now, an exact Diary is a window into his heart that maketh it, and therefore pity it is that any eyes should look therein, but either the friends of the party, or such ingenious foes as will not [...] make conjectural comments to his disgrace'.¹¹³ Fuller and Hunter

¹¹¹ Hunter, *Thomas Cartwright*, xi-xii.

¹¹² Donald Stauffer, *The Art of English Biography Before 1700* (Cambridge, 1930), cited in Nussbaum, 'Toward Conceptualizing Diary', 3.

¹¹³ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, 218, quoted in Hunter, *Thomas Cartwright*, xiv.

intimate the sensation of being in a private written space which should provoke a sense of moral duty to abide by a scholarly contract of trust between themselves and the diarist. Hunter was himself quoted as saying ‘Bad must that heart be, when a faithful diary can be looked at with any but the most candid eyes, or turned perversely to the injury of his reputation who left it’.¹¹⁴ A similar sentiment was expressed by the historian of antiquarianism Stuart Piggott when he insisted of antiquarian diarists that ‘it is as individuals, sometimes eccentric, that they made their contributions to knowledge, and as such they should be understood and remembered’.¹¹⁵

Fuller, Hunter and even Piggott seem to demonstrate a sympathy with their subjects, and a sense that they shared some fundamental characteristic that qualified the subject as worthy of respect and trust. Of course, their subjects were eminent men of letters – men after their own hearts – and would therefore probably attract their collegiate respect. It could be, however, that they also perceived in the diaries evidence of an individualistic personality not dissimilar to their own. The ‘window into his heart that maketh it’ was a window into the diarist’s personality, a spyglass into past secrets and selves. Eventually this correlation between the content of a diary and the interior world of the self would become attached to autobiographical texts of the early modern period. The theory that clearly stated this correlation and that advanced a provocative argument about the history of the self would emerge not twenty years after Hunter’s edition of Cartwright’s diary.

This theory was Jacob Burckhardt’s ‘Renaissance individualism’, published in 1860. It stated that the Renaissance awarded ‘the highest development to individuality’, leading the individual to ‘the most zealous and thorough study of

¹¹⁴ Henry James Morehouse (ed.), *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke* (London, 1874), iii.

¹¹⁵ Piggott, *Ancient Britons*, 11.

himself in all forms and under all conditions'. The 'development of personality', Burckhardt argued, 'essentially involved the recognition of it in oneself and in others'.¹¹⁶ The self-study involved in the writing of autobiographies, such as that of Benvenuto Cellini, provided evidence for Burckhardt to claim that a new type of individual had emerged, one that was 'autonomous, self-confident, [and] self-aware'.¹¹⁷ The advent of autobiography proper was therefore simultaneously the advent of a novel form of selfhood, born in the Renaissance.

Decades' worth of critical literature has shown Burckhardt's Renaissance individualism to be 'as much removed from early modernity as it is from the modern realities in which it was invented'. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this critique has also provided a historicising of concepts about the self.¹¹⁸ Seen more as a 'vexing problem' than a solution, 'Renaissance individualism' has been shifted aside by, for example, theories of self-fashioning such as those by Stephen Greenblatt in the 1980s.¹¹⁹ Greenblatt suggested that the sixteenth century witnessed an 'increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process'; the forming of a self became bound up in '*fashion*'.¹²⁰ He argued that communal relationships, social roles and the rights of property were instrumental in the forming of identity, rather than post-Enlightenment ideas of agency.¹²¹ His work transformed the Burckhardtian individual into a 'dissolving and endlessly refashioned

¹¹⁶ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York, 2002).

¹¹⁷ Katharine Hodgkin, 'Elizabeth Isham's Everlasting Library: Memory and Self in Early Modern Autobiography', in Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor (eds.), *History and Psyche: Culture, Psychoanalysis, and the Past* (Basingstoke, 2012), 242.

¹¹⁸ Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation', 268.

¹¹⁹ Delany, *Autobiography*, 2.

¹²⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL, 1980), 2.

¹²¹ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture', in Patricia Parker and David Quint (eds.), *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts* (Baltimore, MD, 1986), 210-24, cited in Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly (eds.), *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation 1550-1660* (Aldershot, 2007), 1.

subject of culture, whose unstable identity was anchored only by the claims of society and the dictates of power'.¹²²

Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning was taken up by early modern historians, such as Margo Todd who used it to argue that diarists like Samuel Ward fashioned their (inward) selves through their writing.¹²³ The concept of the self was indeed radically changed, but the work of Greenblatt, and the new historicists who utilised the method of reading texts by relating them to those 'claims of society', ideologies and 'dictates of power', did not go unchallenged. Aers, for example, wrote that despite their criticism of Burckhardt's Renaissance individualism the new historicists and cultural materialists continued to rely on the Burckhardtian Middle Ages as 'an essential part of their version of our history'. He argued that a pervasive idealism was responsible for their use of an invented medieval age as a convenient background against which they could illustrate their arguments.¹²⁴ Aers's critique reminds us that the characteristics Burckhart and the new historicists attached to the Renaissance, such as languages and experiences of inwardness, or 'splits between outer realities and inner forms of being', existed well before the seventeenth century. What is interesting in Aers's critique though, is that among the sources he uses to substantiate his argument one finds the autobiographical works of Augustine and Margery Kempe. This correlation between autobiography and self was thus marshalled on both sides of this debate.

¹²² Hodgkin, 'Everlasting Library', 243.

¹²³ Todd, 'Puritan Self-Fashioning', 236-264.

¹²⁴ Aers, 'Whisper', 194-5. The main works targeted in this essay are F. Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London, 1984); C. Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London, 1985); J. Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* (Brighton, 1984); T. Eagleton, *Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1986); S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, IL, 1980), and *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Los Angeles, CA, 1988).

Katharine Hodgkin has suggested that these studies of ‘self-fashioning’ were ‘more a product of their own historical moment than perhaps first appeared’, encouraging us to see them in some context.¹²⁵ Postmodern theory features in that context, influencing the studies published after the 1980s. This theory posits that self is ideologically constructed, rather than being an eternal and essential truth or a ‘universal human nature exist[ing] outside the confines of history’. Within this school of thought autobiographical texts could be considered as ‘modes of signification’ or ‘linguistic representations’ arising from historically contingent discourses.¹²⁶ Some historians have perceived a negative impact of this theory. Walsham, for example, comments that ‘postmodernism has undermined academic confidence about the possibility of ever peeling away the distorting veil of language that divides us from the past’.¹²⁷ Far from paralysing students of the self and autobiography, however, postmodern theory has been utilised by both historians and literary scholars. Mascuch’s *Origins of the Individualist Self* is one such work, where the influence of postmodern theory is clear in his assertion that ‘personal self-identity is an effect of human activity in the landscape of society and culture’.¹²⁸ In this work Mascuch argues that the origins and realization of the ‘generic form of the individualist self’ lay in the advent of the ‘unified, retrospective first-person prose narrative’, or the modern autobiography.¹²⁹ How he conceptualises the components of his theory is interesting. Firstly, he takes autobiography to be a cultural practice, similar to what Pierre Bourdieu would have termed a ‘field’ of significance, rather than a genre as formalists would have it. He describes autobiography as a practice of self-representation, with

¹²⁵ Hodgkin, ‘Everlasting Library’, 243.

¹²⁶ Nussbaum, ‘Toward Conceptualizing Diary’, 3-4.

¹²⁷ Alexandra Walsham, ‘History, Memory and the English Reformation’, *HJ*, 55, 4 (2012), 906.

¹²⁸ Mascuch, *Origins*, 18.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6, 18.

many potential forms and consequent self-identities.¹³⁰ Secondly, he defines his concept of individualist self as ‘the referent of a person who speaks about and values his own and other persons’ identities as independent, autonomous units – “selves” – who have a hand in crafting their separate and therefore individual destinies’.¹³¹ The ability to see one’s life in narrative, not solely in the form of ‘historical’ or ‘self-consciousness’, but through the producing and consuming of stories about oneself, is the hallmark of the individualist self. Put together, these conceptions allow Mascuch to observe that the modern autobiography ‘constitutes the essential mode of individualistic agency’, and to thus assert that the history of autobiography is also the history of the individualist self.¹³² The history he then sketches of autobiography is considered as analogous to the history of the modern self.

As provocative as this work is, Michael Hunter’s observation of the study is worth mentioning: that Mascuch’s argument ‘should not be allowed to deflect attention from the important insights available from people’s writings about themselves over the previous two and half centuries’.¹³³ Because the study is a genealogical one of origins, the risk is that the texts preceding the 1790s might be read as being in a state of ‘becoming’ or in a period of advent. There is a risk of overshadowing their significance, which may not lie in the extent to which they signal the arrival (or not) of a unified modern self, but rather in how their potential incoherence and fragmentation reveals the specificity of early modern subjectivities.

Parallel to and following the publication of Mascuch’s work there have been studies pursuing the study of early modern self and autobiography in different

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 21-23.

¹³³ Hunter, ‘Life-Writing’, 584.

directions. Some have sought to revise the correlation between self and autobiography. Shari Benstock, for example, addresses what she calls ‘the very coincidence of “ontology” and “autobiography”’.¹³⁴ Other revisionary work has situated the self as just one facet of ‘numerous discourses... that construct subjectivity as a nexus’.¹³⁵ Engaging with the problematisation of self and autobiography, some literary scholars have adopted an alternative approach wherein self-representation becomes the object of study, rather than self. What, indeed, is self without representation, and how can we access it in any other form than a representation? Representation in autobiographical texts is therefore indicative, if not responsible, for alterations in self in this period, particularly if we accept the logic of Michelle Dowd and Julia Eckerle that ‘textual form and the subjectivity it produces are mutually constitutive’.¹³⁶ Thus, the improvised forms described by Smyth and the newly emergent spiritual diary and autobiography were ‘both the register and the rehearsal of this larger shift’.¹³⁷

The symbiotic relationship between textual form and subjectivity is an elegant one; engagement with and adaptation of form was a site of agency, a powerful agency which rendered a distinctive and compelling realm of experience. The effect was a sense of self conditional upon the practice of self-writing, or as Elizabeth Heale puts it, ‘through their possession of the pen, these autobiographical authors literally ma[d]e themselves’.¹³⁸ Though recollected only second-hand, we can get a sense of this subjective experience in the recollections of Samuel Bury on his wife’s diary-writing. Samuel recollected Elizabeth’s frequent reflections that ‘were it not for her *Diary*, she

¹³⁴ Shari Benstock (ed.), *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writings* (London, 1988), 10-11.

¹³⁵ Bedford, Davis, and Kelly (eds.), *English Lives*, 6.

¹³⁶ Dowd and Eckerle (eds.), *Genre and Women’s Life Writing*, 1, quoted in Hodgkin, ‘Everlasting Library’, 244.

¹³⁷ Katharine Hodgkin, *Madness in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography* (Basingstoke, 2007), 22.

¹³⁸ Heale, *Autobiography*, 3.

should neither know what she *was*, or what she *did*, or what she *had*... the Review of former Experience, was an extraordinary help to future Confidence [which] brought her again to her great Rock, and Refuge, and Rest'.¹³⁹ Elizabeth's diary was a spiritual diary written 1693-1720, practiced in the patterned routine and stylistic religiosity of the godly. She thus engaged with a distinctively seventeenth-century textual form which wrought a unique form of subjectivity, which in turn demanded, reinforced and reformed, over and over, that form and practice of self-writing.

That said, engagement with and adaptation of a textual form cannot be solely responsible for the subjectivity arising from writing a first-person account; not without its social and cultural context. What would Bury's written subjectivity be without her engagement with the lives of godly figures from which she drew the template, or the similar practices of her kin and community, or indeed without the physical space in which she composed the said diary? Alongside his account of her diary-keeping Bury wrote of her 'solemn *Transactions* betwixt GOD and her own Soul, in her *Closet*, in her *Family*, and in the *Assembly*, and in her *daily Walk* and *Conversation* with others', which tells us that her closet was just one of several spaces where her godly (and written) and social self was exercised.¹⁴⁰ The subjective element of her self-writing was not limited to the blank page, but extended into the physical and social spaces influencing her practices. Just as Robert Darnton reminded us that the 'where' of reading is important, so we should also remember the importance of the 'where' of writing.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Bury, *Elizabeth Bury*, 13.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴¹ Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (London, 1990), 167, quoted in Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 34.

Bury's example gives credence to Fulbrook and Rublack's suggestion that subjectivity, and the sense of self experienced by the subject, emerges from 'connection, rather than detachment', and that the self must necessarily be relational.¹⁴² We therefore need to draw on studies of autobiography and self inspired by cultural history, and which locate written subjectivity in a broader context of social and kinship networks, psychic drives and emotions. These scholars have moved away from focussing just on language and power, and away from the Foucauldian repudiation of a continuous psychic dimension.¹⁴³ This does not mean that they posit an essentialist idea of self, but that they see the socially constructed self as more than what is 'written on a blank page, as a pure effect of language and power'.¹⁴⁴ We might look to the work of Lyndal Roper in the history of witchcraft as a comparison; as mentioned in chapter 1 she demonstrates that consideration of the psychic dimension can only enhance our reconstruction of experience.¹⁴⁵ If we accept then that self-writing is imitative and constitutive of an inner life, of subjectivity and the construction of self therein, then consideration of these factors must feature in a study of them.

Taking a step back then, this scholarship suggests that the early modern period saw shifts in selfhood because novel forms of self-representation emerged in the new types of first-person narratives. These accounts wrought distinctive subjectivities which in turn informed types of self-writing. That said, any 'self' we might imagine as emerging from self-writing must be considered as relational and set into the context

¹⁴² Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation', 269.

¹⁴³ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994); Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*; Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (London, 1984).

¹⁴⁴ See Hodgkin, 'Everlasting Library', 243. See also Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago, IL, 1995).

¹⁴⁵ Roper, *Oedipus*, 2-5.

of cultural practice and social connection. What has not been addressed in this brief survey, however, and which must be examined to understand these sources, is something encountered throughout the historiography of autobiography and self: the significance of memory. Thinking about memory helps us to imagine the writer as an active remembering subject and it helps to build a picture as to why self-writing could simultaneously be the subjective exercise of providentialism.

Writing a first-person account, whether daily or once-in-a-lifetime, is an act of memory, something that is inherently creative. For the sake of this thesis, this seemingly simple formulation holds the key to understanding these sources and to opening them up as sites of the subjective exercise of providentialism. It is an observation made by Hodgkin, inspired by her study of history of madness. If we accept that to be mad is to be ‘dislocated from one’s past, only an imprisoned Now’ and madness to be a crisis of selfhood, then we can accept that one’s memory also constitutes one’s sense of self.¹⁴⁶ A memory text, or a monument like Rokeby’s, is therefore a ‘primary assertion of selfhood’.¹⁴⁷ As Anderson observed of the earliest example of autobiography, Augustine’s *Confessions*, it is within the ‘vast cloisters’ of memory that Augustine ‘meets himself’, and that his writings might encourage us to see how memory is both the ‘container of... experiences’ and yet still ‘greater than what it contains’.¹⁴⁸ The act of memory in self-writing creates not merely a product or a receptacle, but also forms a ‘remembering subject’. Hodgkin’s simple formulation therefore opens for us a connection between autobiographical texts and selfhood, but more importantly it depicts self-writing as a site of personal agency. The remainder of

¹⁴⁶ Janet Frame, *An Angel at My Table* (London, 2001, first pub. 1984), 194, quoted in Hodgkin, *Madness*, 20.

¹⁴⁷ Hodgkin, ‘Everlasting Library’, 241.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, *Autobiography*, 19.

this section will sketch out an interpretation of this formulation by thinking further about memory.

To understand and augment Hodgkin's formulation we can consider the findings of Wendy J. Wiener and George C. Rosenwald, whose concern is the psychology of keeping a diary. Admittedly, theirs is a study of contemporary adolescent diarists, though their findings are thought-provoking, particularly their inquiry into the 'subjective utility' of a diary. Some of their findings might be cautiously applied to early modern texts. One position they take is to move past the voyeuristic approach of taking diaries as the record of secret truth and to replace it with a pragmatic one: 'we are then watching the diarist at work rather than mining hidden facts'.¹⁴⁹ The benefit of this approach is how it foregrounds the powerful agency driving the construction a written life. The action is one of memory and one of selection, 'a choosing, a highlighting, a shaping, an enshrinement', which encourages us to look at a first-person account as 'not simply that which has escaped forgetting'.¹⁵⁰ It is also not just a simple act of retrospection, but an 'act of anticipative memory', whereby memory is mobilized 'in the service of new living'.¹⁵¹ These observations again encourage us to look beyond the first-person account as a receptacle, but to look at the agency of the remembering subject behind it.

These observations also correlate with the improvisational nature of early modern self-writing discussed above, and with how these texts could be designed for re-reading and reflection, re-writing and circulation. Wiener and Rosenwald's comments on selection, on 'shaping' and 'choosing' are also helpful to notice writers shaping

¹⁴⁹ Wendy J. Wiener and George C. Rosenwald, 'A Moment's Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary', in Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography*, iv, 67-8.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 82-3.

their accounts. For example, the diary of Leicestershire rector John Thomlinson (1692-1761) opens with, ‘I kept a journal at Cambridge, but in loose papers, and thought to transcribe it here, but found it not worth the labour, so only took an extract of most material things’.¹⁵² Here we can see Thomlinson ‘at work’, constructing out of his past written self an ‘authentic’ personal testament and presenting it within the ‘discourse of memory’.¹⁵³ It demonstrates a translation or substitution of a personal reality into a ‘narrative representation’ because it exposes the assignation of meaning to some but not all events.¹⁵⁴ Thomlinson was not just remembering but shaping and choosing experiences. It is for this reason that first-person accounts of the period might be considered as ‘fictive texts’, the site of ‘turning the ephemerality of action and speech into an artefact’.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Skura writes that trying to distinguish between ‘truth’ against ‘fiction’ is relatively fruitless in early modern autobiographical texts because they are the product (and act) of memory and therefore unreliable in terms of verifiable truth.¹⁵⁶

Self-writing clearly involves agency. It is a creative act of memory that is wrapped up in the assignation of meaning (in the shaping and choosing), and consequently the construction of an ‘authentic’ personal history. We might think of the texts as ‘fictive’ insofar as they were fashioned, but the writer was composing a personal truth which ordered their experience into a meaningful temporal sequence.¹⁵⁷ And for early modern writers this meant writing themselves into God’s time, because they understood themselves to be *sub species aeternitatis*.¹⁵⁸ Understanding the creative act

¹⁵² ‘Diary of the Rev. John Thomlinson’, 65.

¹⁵³ Hodgkin, *Madness*, 20.

¹⁵⁴ Nussbaum, ‘Toward Conceptualizing Diary’, 10-11.

¹⁵⁵ Sangha, ‘Documents’, 108-9; Webster, ‘Writing’, 40.

¹⁵⁶ Skura, *Tudor Autobiography*, 3-6.

¹⁵⁷ Lynch, *Autobiography*, 10. See also discussion of verisimilitude, Shuger, ‘Life-Writing’, 64.

¹⁵⁸ See Bedford, Davis, and Kelly (eds.), *Early Modern English Lives*, 18, 34. The phrase *sub specie aeternitatis* is often associated with providentialism, and is quoted in this context by Matthew Kadane

of memory inherent in self-writing therefore requires some appreciation of the temporality of the document, the gap ‘between the I who writes, in the present, and the I who is written, in the past’.¹⁵⁹ Recovering that temporality requires some reconstruction of how the account was composed, and each of the following chapters will provide evidence of the composition of the account studied in order to understand this temporality. Only then can we appreciate the nature of this agency, this creative act of memory.

This section has demonstrated the relationship between autobiographical writing and the construction of selfhood. Because the seventeenth century witnessed new textual forms, in the spiritual diary and the texts it influenced, it therefore saw the emergence of new representations of self. To understand that selfhood, however, the texts and self represented within them must be placed in their social and cultural contexts. This is why each case study provides details of the subject’s history. Furthermore, this section has offered a conceptualisation as to how self is constructed in these texts. It argued that self-writing involves a shaping, highlighting and a choosing – that it is a creative, immersive act of memory. Because our sense of memory informs our sense of self, and these texts are acts of memory, what is written is therefore an act of selfhood. This is an important conceptualisation because in choosing, and observing, accounting and remembering providences, these writers were incorporating providence into their sense of self – quite literally, into their writing self, and their written self.

in *The Watchful Clothier: The Life of an Eighteenth-Century Protestant Capitalist* (London, 2013), and by Paul S. Seaver in *Wallington’s World: A Puritan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, CA, 1985), but the phrase was originally coined by Baruch Spinoza in his *Ethics*, Part V (1677).

¹⁵⁹ Wiener and Rosenwald, ‘A Moment’s Monument’, 66.

2.3. The Exercise of Providentialism in Self-Writing

Building on the account of self-writing established in the previous two sections and on the conceptualisation of self-writing as a creative act of memory, this last section makes explicit the relationship between self-writing and the exercise of providentialism. It will explain the qualities required of the sources used in this study (why they were selected) and will describe what providence looks like in a first-person account, including the kind of ‘typical’ language used and where writers often applied it in accounts. It will then explain what is meant by the ‘exercise of providentialism’ in the thesis, namely, the observing, accounting and remembering of providences.

Blair Worden has observed that the expression of providentialism in seventeenth-century accounts is ‘so ubiquitous ... and at times so repetitive and predictable in its expression that our familiarity with it may breed, if not contempt, then at least neglect’.¹⁶⁰ Worden’s point is a poignant one with regard to first-person accounts of the early modern period, including those used in this study. Expressions of providentialism sometimes occur with such formulaic repetition that the phrases ‘thanks be to God’, or ‘by God’s mercy’, can pass by without notice. In spiritual diaries these phrases are so continuous, so habitual, that they glide past the eye all too easily, and only extraordinary events end up attracting attention. But it is these quotidian, mundane utterances acknowledging the hand, smile or frown of providence that make up the wider picture of the role of providence in the lives of these individuals.¹⁶¹ The phrases denote the exercise of providentialism in a document. They allude to a view

¹⁶⁰ Blair Worden, ‘Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England’, *P&P*, 109 (1985), 55.

¹⁶¹ On the cultural history of gesture that can contextualise these smiles, frowns, hands and fingers see Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London, 1991); Michael J. Braddick (ed.), *The Politics of Gesture: Historical Perspectives* (Oxford, 2009); P. P. Murphy, ‘A Cultural History of Gesture: England c.1380-1559’ (Queens Univ. Belfast Ph.D. thesis, 2014).

of the world wherein God's mercy and judgement needed to be observed, accounted and remembered, even if this was achieved only through a short and habitual phrase.

Worden explains that while these expressions might appear predictable, they were also 'conventional' in the sense that they belong to 'conventional piety', 'the bread and butter of so much seventeenth-century thinking'. We should not ignore it as 'mere literary decoration'.¹⁶² It is of course possible that, just as the historian's eyes might glide over these phrases due to their typicality and regularity, some authors made these utterances as a matter of routine or habit in their writing, not necessarily considering their weight. For some they might be literary decoration. For Rokeby, however, each invocation of providence and expression of gratitude seems carefully considered and deeply felt, despite his being acutely aware of repetition: 'I hope it is not any vain repetition for me to say over and over again in the same words that God hath been and still is infinitely good and gracious unto me'.¹⁶³ It is the intention of this study to therefore pay attention to the typicality and repetition of such phrases in the documents, to note how and when they are applied to an occurrence, and to piece together a more general picture of that application. Combined with a sensitivity to the context and composition of the documents, the observation of these elements will provide a sense of the subjective experience of providentialism.

To achieve this reconstruction the sources selected for this study had to meet a simple criterion: they had to contain allusions to providence. To be useful as a case study they also needed to be of sufficient length to provide enough material to identify the frequency, intensity and variety of providential expression. Some sources used for incidental detail contained a few reflections on providence, but those used in chapters

¹⁶² Worden, 'Providence', 55.

¹⁶³ Raine, *Justice Rokeby*, 48.

3-6 allow for an impression to emerge page after page, over time. The diaries, reviews and commonplace books used can therefore give a sense of what the exercise of providence wrought for the writer, its function or utility, how it felt and what it meant.

This said, explanation of how sources were selected also needs to include what an ‘allusion to providence’ looks like in an account. Accounts written by ‘conventional’ or mainstream Protestants share language of providentialism with their neighbouring ‘saints’, influenced as they likely were by the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping. In their examination of Josselin’s diary, Bedford, Davis and Kelly describe his acknowledgement of providence as a ‘constant tipping of the hat’. This is an apt description because even in this clergyman’s diary many providential utterances were typical, formulaic and repetitive. They did the job of recognising God’s hand, even if they were an ‘invariable and almost hypnotic locution’.¹⁶⁴ The common leitmotif of providence is the language of mercy and judgement, and thanks. ‘Providence’ is often explicitly invoked, but not always. It is instead implied through these ideas and terms, moving with a certain degree of elision and flexibility. Judgement might be synonymous with ‘punishment’, or ‘frowns’, or ‘dispensations’. Mercies might appear as deliverances, ‘smiles’, or ‘kindnesses’. These ‘workings’ were enacted by the ‘hand’, or ‘finger’ of God, whereby he would ‘exercise’ his providences towards the individual, ‘placing’ them in a particular situation. It could be that God ‘graciously appears’ to them through a course of events. There are many expressions used to describe providence, but these are very common.

Acknowledgement of merciful providence typically acts as either the prelude or coda to an entry in a diary or the narration of an event. The experience occasioning

¹⁶⁴ Bedford, Davis, and Kelly (eds.), *Early Modern English Lives*, 32.

such an acknowledgement might relate to any aspect of life, whether social, environmental or spiritual. Unsurprisingly, however, expressions of thanks to God's mercy mostly accompany accounts of scrapes, near-mishaps and misfortunes. The vicissitudes of early modern life were plentiful and keenly felt. This uncertainty is often reflected in accounts of journeys. Going by the number of falls and crashes in the sources, fear of mishap whilst travelling was justified. Hannah Housman fell from a horse at a full gallop, her foot caught in the stirrup, and was nearly trampled by the animal, upon which she reflected 'I cannot but be somewhat affected at the gracious Appearance of God to me at this Time'.¹⁶⁵ Dr Claver Morris had a similar experience involving a young bear causing mischief at the roadside, 'but by the favourable Providence of Almighty God I was not thrown down'.¹⁶⁶ Rokeby's account of the fore axletree of his coach breaking when driving away from the House of Lords elicited a lengthy narration of what harm might have come to him 'for if the horses (which were young and unruly) had run away, it might have killed or maimed us'. The event caused him to reflect on a much-quoted reference, that 'Lord, it is certain that a sparrow falls not to the ground without our heavenly Father, Matt. x. 29; then, certainly, we ought to observe and improve the passages of God's providence to us in the remarkable events of our lives'. He concluded with another common cadence: 'blessed by Thy holy name... Amen. Amen'.¹⁶⁷

Similar expressions of gratitude to the mercy of divine providence can be found accompanying accounts of various encounters with an uncertain world, from the recovery from illness, to reliance on favourable weather. For example, Sub-Dean of Salisbury Thomas Naish noted in 1696 that 'God in mercy hath shutt up the windows

¹⁶⁵ Pearsall, *Power and Pleasure*, 93.

¹⁶⁶ Hobhouse, *West Country Physician*, 90.

¹⁶⁷ Raine, *Justice Rokeby*, 42.

of heaven and made ye waters retire to their place appointed for them, so that we have a very good season for harvest, the best as hath been known and a plentiful cropp'.¹⁶⁸ Such encounters with nature would not always elicit thanks for mercy, however. As creatures, these were a people in receipt of dispensations, and judgments. Fire was especially considered as a punishment. Housman reflected thus in 1731:

God is known ... by the Works of his Hand, and the Judgments that are abroad. The dreadful Fires, that have lately happened at *Blandford* and *Tiverton*, are very awful Providences... But what is the Voice of this awful Providence? Sure it is an Intimation of the Displeasure of the great God ... He hath before been contending with this Nation by lesser Judgments, by Sickness, by Deadness of Trade; but who hath returned to the Lord? He hath also been trying us with Mercies; but alas what a stubborn People are we, that are not drawn by the milder Methods, nor driven by more sever Dispensations!¹⁶⁹

Just as Housman denounced an England of 'stubborn People' so too did James Clegg in 1711 denounce William Cooper as a liar and a drunkard, whose house in Chappell le Frith was burned down 'by accident'. Both Cooper and a young girl lost their lives, in Clegg's eyes, as a result of Cooper's covetousness and oppressions.¹⁷⁰ The tone of accounts could thus turn quickly to condemnation of nations, regarding general providences, or of individuals with regard to special providences. Condemnation of this sort savours of godly condescension, though as we shall see in the next chapter many could be quick and easy with their observations of providence in others' lives, not just their own.

As Waddell has illustrated, the role of providence in economic and social aspects of life was significant.¹⁷¹ Social encounters could therefore elicit invocations of

¹⁶⁸ Slatter, *Thomas Naish*, 37.

¹⁶⁹ Pearsall, *Power and Pleasure*, 73-4.

¹⁷⁰ Doe, *James Clegg*, ii, 5.

¹⁷¹ Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012). See also Jacob Viner, *The Role of Providence in the Social Order* (Philadelphia, 1972).

providence. Roger Lowe often reported the hand of providence in his interactions with others, such as in the ‘breach amongst us’, the young people of the town, which made them ‘sore discomforted’.¹⁷² He also observed God’s hand in his relationship with Mary Naylor who, though she was apt to frown at him frequently, he reserved some hope due to his coming home one day after visiting her and noticing that ‘there was a direct N and halfe of M providentially made upon my breeches, plaine to view in any man’s sight, made of mire with leapeing. I looked upon it to be from providence, and fortold somethinge in my apprehension. The smallest of God’s providences should not be past by without observetion.’ Smiling providences indeed.¹⁷³

These brief examples indicate the kind of invocations of providence that appear repeatedly in the pages of first-person accounts. The significance of such typical phrases is that whether they appear in every entry, or only once or twice, they denote the subscription to a providential worldview. Furthermore, there is not only a sense of ‘typicality’ in this language, there is also continuity. Elizabethan puritan diarist Lady Margaret Hoby wrote in 1603 that ‘It was tould Mr. Hoby that a ship was wrecked vp at Burnestone vpon his land, and thus at all times God bestowed benefitts vpon vs; God make us thankful’.¹⁷⁴ A little later Lady Anne Clifford, 14th Baroness de Clifford, wrote in her 1616-19 diary that ‘This day I may say I was led miraculously by God’s providence and next to that I must attribute all my good to the worth and nobleness of my Lord’s disposition for neither I nor anybody else thought that I should have passed over this day so well as I thank God I have done’.¹⁷⁵ These notes of thanks bear close resemblance to those made by writers of the period addressed in this study, and also

¹⁷² Sachse, *Roger Lowe*, 49.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 35, 27.

¹⁷⁴ Evelyn Fox, ‘The Diary of an Elizabethan Gentlewoman’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1908), 165.

¹⁷⁵ Katherine Acheson (ed.), *The Memoir of 1603 and The Diary of 1616-1619: Anne Clifford* (Toronto, 2007), 115.

to those made by later writers. For example, in 1777 ‘Parson’ James Woodforde of Weston Longville, Norfolk, commented that ‘it was very disagreeable to come home thro’ the Wood that I did, but I thank God I got safe and well back tho’ very dark’. Like the writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, he marked his thanks to providence in a short note of ‘blessed be God’.¹⁷⁶ These excerpts demonstrate the continuity in the allusions to providence in these first-person accounts, and are testament to how being observant of God’s providences continued to be part of a softer, less self-conscious national religious culture.

It should be made clear, however, that these references to providence do not appear in the same context, frequency or written with the same intent across these sources. As discussed above, there were many reasons a writer would begin to compile a written life and that variety is reflected also in the invocation of providence. Many of the accounts of this period contain only one or two allusions to providence, some none at all. Cambridge Alderman Samuel Newton’s diary, for example, contains references to fires, and to a surprising number of ill encounters with the perilous stairs in Trinity College, Cambridge, but very few are accompanied by any recognition of providence. There is the odd reference to God’s mercy when he had recovered from serious illness, but the majority of this alderman’s diary is the recording of what was personal and more of what was professional, rather than what was providential. A notable exception is his account of being chosen as an Alderman in August 1668, remarkable because he considered it to be the work of providence and, explicitly, to be ‘by diuine appointment’.¹⁷⁷ His providential observations were few, then, but one of the clearest invocations of providence was of a very present, particular intervention.

¹⁷⁶ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 91.

¹⁷⁷ Foster, *Samuel Newton*, 28-9, for the perilous stairs, 8, 16, 118.

This could be valuable because it is suggestive of what belief or practice might be happening beyond the pages of the diary. But it is only suggestive, and interpretation of it can only take us so far because we know little else of his providentialism.

On the other end of the spectrum, habitual providential utterances litter the pages of spiritual diaries and autobiographies, such as that of Wallington or Bury. Strangely, they do not always reveal as much as one might expect of the role of providence in the writer's life. Something that has not yet been discussed about spiritual diarists is the paradoxical nature of their writing. Matthew Kadane describes it as 'prolixity', a torrent of words to hide meaning. As he demonstrates through the diaries of Leeds clothier Joseph Ryder, we may read volumes of material without gaining any sense of the texture or detail of the writer's life. Kadane writes that instead of the diary rescuing Ryder from obscurity, he instead had to rescue Ryder 'from the obscurity of his diary'. Ryder recorded little personal detail, because it would have 'vainly consumed paper and ink'.¹⁷⁸ A similar observation might be made of Hoby's diary, which 'plods' through her reflections on prayer and daily devotions, and though there are mentions of her third husband, Thomas Hoby, they yield very little of the nature of their relationship.¹⁷⁹ There is an abundance of material exhibiting religiosity and the exercise of these writers' spirituality, but little to demonstrate their providentialism in the wider context of their lives.

Thus, there are a large quantity of sources from the period c.1660-c.1720 that invoke providence. Some say very little about providence, and although those few invocations can be revealing, they are difficult to interpret because we cannot build a picture of their overall exercise of providentialism. Others say a great deal about

¹⁷⁸ Kadane, *Watchful Clothier*, 16-17.

¹⁷⁹ Bedford, Davis, and Kelly (eds.), *Early Modern English Lives*, 180.

providence, but the significance of their invocations is obscured because they give no sense of the context of providence in their lives. Both kinds of source are utilised in the thesis, but the case studies in the following chapters sit somewhere between these two extremes. The diaries and remembrances of Elizabeth Freke, Robert Meeke, Samuel Jeake and Edmund Harrold provide some texture of their lives and characters, and also contain enough providential content to communicate their exercise and experience of the belief and the feelings that went with it.

Having explained what providence looked like in a personal account, and how and why the main case studies have been selected, this section will close with a discussion of what the ‘exercise of providentialism’ is taken to mean in this thesis, namely the observing, accounting and remembering of providences.

The exercise of providentialism starts with observation, because gratitude to God required the practitioner to ‘observe and acknowledge’ deliverances and punishments (as reflected in national thanksgivings and fasts).¹⁸⁰ Observation and acknowledgement was a form of ‘spiritual watchfulness’ which ‘needed to be as constant and comprehensive as God’s providential interventions’.¹⁸¹ Being ‘watchful’, however, encompassed more than just providential practice because it ‘captured so much of the essence of early modern English Protestantism’. Kadane dubs Ryder as ‘the watchful clothier’ for this reason. ‘Watching’, Ryder shows us, was an act of a vigilant soul.¹⁸²

‘Watching’ is a recurring theme, starting with those early diarists of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean era. Webster notes how Thomas Shepard uses the prefixes

¹⁸⁰ Starr, *Defoe*, 8.

¹⁸¹ Kadane, *Watchful Clothier*, 47.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 51.

‘I saw...’, Michael Wigglesworth’s ‘I find’, or ‘God let me see’, and Samuel Rogers’s ‘I have observed’.¹⁸³ Richard Rogers wrote that ‘when I doe my duties without feare of mine owne corruption and without watchfulnes I must confesse that thei are to my selfe unsavory, and without comfort’.¹⁸⁴ These earlier diarists set the precedent of associating watchfulness with spiritual comfort and fulfilment. Writing in 1719, Joseph Williams also felt this, praising his late father for his ‘great watchfulness, and close walking with God’.¹⁸⁵ The problem for these writers, however, was that they feared the consequences when they had failed to watch closely enough, as Thomas Naish had in 1698:

Methinks this year hath passed very silently over my head. I thank the good providence of God for preserving me from any thing that hath been remarkably ill, from any imminent danger, let me not grow insensible of his mercys, or supinely negligent, let me not want any remarkable providence to awake me to a sense of my duty but as fast and as secretly as my time passeth away let me make all due observation upon my life and actions, and take heed to my ways.¹⁸⁶

In this instance Naish revealed an anxiety about not being adequately sensible or observant of God’s work. He feared that such negligence would yield retributive affliction, and instead of receiving God’s mercies he would be subject to such punishment that would reawaken him to a right and proper state of vigilance. Only through vigilance, and the diligent recording of those mercies, together with his thanks for them, could he hope to avoid this.

Observing was thus the first part of the exercise of providentialism. It was then complemented by the accounting and remembrance of the providence in question, as

¹⁸³ Webster, ‘Writing’, 50.

¹⁸⁴ Mascuch, *Origins*, 79.

¹⁸⁵ Fawcett, *Extracts*, 14.

¹⁸⁶ Slatter, *Thomas Naish*, 40.

seen here in an entry by James Clegg, minister at Chapel-en-le-Frith, in December 1709:

This Day by the goodness I and my dear wife had a great deliverance, an headstrong horse boggled and run away with us in very dangerous way and cast us off in a very dangerous place yet neither of us Received the least harm. Adored be infinite goodness: what shall I render. I intend as a grateful acknowledgement of this favour to keep this day yearly as a Day of Thanksgiving to God and to give each year 5 shil: to the poor on that day.¹⁸⁷

This example demonstrates a diarist observing, accounting and remembering a providence. Clegg observed this deliverance and he inscribed it in his diary in anticipation of its annual remembrance. The entry therefore takes us through the whole process of what is regularly exercised in these texts. Marking a day of thanksgiving is not a common reaction, however. The kind of remembrance that is implied in most providential utterances is that which is implicit in self-writing, that of the ‘backward with the forward gaze’ described by Wiener and Rosenwald.¹⁸⁸ When writing an account the writer most likely expected to re-read it, and thus to remember what was accounted, hoping to re-immense themselves in the emotional, psychological and spiritual significance of that event. This 1712 entry by Clegg gives us a sense of this practice: ‘in the conclusion of this day I think fit to comit these resolutions to writing that I may hereafter review them in judgeing myself’.¹⁸⁹

Moreover, like many diarists, such as Thoresby and even Naish, at the end of each year Clegg ‘review[ed] and record[ed] the gracious dispensations of Divine providence both to publick and myself in particular’.¹⁹⁰ The idea of ‘reviewing’ observations is a common one and is essentially the practice underwriting the

¹⁸⁷ Doe, *James Clegg*, ii, 2.

¹⁸⁸ Wiener and Rosenwald, ‘A Moment’s Monument’, 84.

¹⁸⁹ Doe, *James Clegg*, ii, 6.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 11.

composition of many of those sources that are not sequential diaries, such as the reviews by Rastrick and Thoresby. Clegg himself wrote an autobiography much later in life, no doubt drawing on his diaries.¹⁹¹ What this shows us is that the exercise of providentialism involved implicit remembrance because self-writing was an act of memory, and a more literal remembrance – a putting back together – in how the content of these texts was re-read, reviewed and served as a source of spiritual renewal.

With this said we can return again to Rokeby and his ‘monument’. The reason that he has featured throughout this chapter is because his phrase ‘I doe now set up this monument’ stated in the epigraph, and the sentiment therein, encapsulates so simply and effectively the exercise of providentialism in these texts. The monument was to the deliverances he received from God, which he had observed and accounted. It was also a monument insofar as it was a material site, an object and an instrument, with which he could access his recollections of God’s providences, and review and remember them.

The utility of such a monument, however, extended beyond recollection or remembrance. Beyond remembrance, the exercise of providentialism in self-writing amounted to the creation of and immersion in a distinctive pool of experience, involving and provoking distinctive modes of feeling. The exercise of providentialism therefore had the potential to play a significant role in how writers felt, not just in terms of emotion, but in their state of mind and their sense of well-being and self.

To some extent this tie to well-being or psychological welfare comes as no surprise. When discussing Rogers’s diary, Haller reflected that he ‘must not be set down too promptly as a morbid introvert’ because ‘His diary ... was obviously written

¹⁹¹ See Clegg’s autobiography in Doe, *James Clegg*, vol. iii; Henry Kirke (ed.), *Extracts from the Diary and Autobiography of Rev. James Clegg* (London, 1899).

as religious exercise and for psychological relief'.¹⁹² Haller's point that these texts play a psychological role is echoed by Booy's observations of Wallington's notebooks, that they are not a steady stream of improvement but are instead the 'ebb and flow of spiritual confidence and spiritual desolation'. He sees a 'cyclical rising and falling of spiritual well-being' in Wallington's writing, rising and falling with the perceived tide of God's favour. Booy argues that you can see Wallington struggling with mental stress, and even conditioned as he was by puritan theology and doctrine, this conditioning did not always provide the solace he needed. It is in those moments of stress, sometimes expressed in parentheses, that we can see his individuality 'disrupting the smooth expression of the doctrinally correct view'.¹⁹³ Booy's observations imply that self-writing can expose fluctuations in the writer's state of mind, but also, if taken further, that the practice of diary-keeping and measuring God's favour, could directly influence that state of mind.

The correlation between the exercise of providentialism in self-writing and the psychological welfare of the writer is therefore not a new one. It is live and present in texts of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. And as we will see, the exercise of providentialism in self-writing involved and provoked distinct modes of feeling, which were instrumental in shaping the writers' sense of self and well-being. To close this section, we can observe an example of these modes of feeling and well-being emerging from the exercise of providentialism in a diary entry by Rokeby:

May 24th, 89. My thoughts were much at ease this day and several good providences of God were this day exercised towards me which I desire to observe and be thankfull for, and from thence to strengthen my faith in God, for His future carrying me on in the station He hath called me to.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Haller, *Puritanism*, 38.

¹⁹³ Booy, *Notebooks*, 27-28.

¹⁹⁴ Raine, *Justice Rokeby*, 38.

Here, Rokeby's 'monument', his exercise of his belief, both reflected and had wrought an easing of his mind. We can see that his recollection of providences in the day just passed was uttered alongside a statement of his present well-being, and this recollection had also guided his mind forward to the future. He saw himself within the grasp of providence and yet it was through his own agency, his observing, accounting and remembering, that he secured confidence in his future. We see here the exercise of providentialism, enacted through self-writing, involving and provoking a mode of feeling, a state of mind, and over time, a sense of self shaped by how he had written and remembered his relationship with providence.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the connection between the practice of self-writing, and the exercise of providentialism. It has shown that in the course of the seventeenth century more people were engaging in self-writing, in the recognisable form of the spiritual diary and autobiography, or in an adaptation thereof. These acts of writing created and reflected diverse and communicative subjectivities that continue to enthrall historians of the self. That act of writing was also a creative act of memory: an act of shaping, choosing, and inventing. Self-writing was a vital site of agency, wherein the writer could both form and exercise their status as a subject, where they could select and 'fix experience', and in doing so select and fix those elements of their memory that were constitutive and imitative of their sense of self.¹⁹⁵ These complex sites of agency facilitated the exercise of providentialism, the observing, accounting and remembering of providences. The enactment of providential belief through self-

¹⁹⁵ Webster, 'Writing', 47.

writing involved, and provoked, distinct modes of feeling, and informed how writers perceived themselves.

The next chapter will apply the findings of this chapter in the case study of Elizabeth Freke. Freke's 'remembrances' are a particularly interesting and complex example of how self-writing was a creative act of memory, and that complexity significantly influenced her subjective experience of providentialism.

3. ‘My God spared my life to know more misery’: Elizabeth Freke, Ambivalence and the Mystery of Providence

In this chapter it will be argued that personal providentialism was exercised in the writing of remembrances. This exercise was bound up in the feeling of ambivalence, a feeling that ran throughout the writer’s account of herself in time and that underwrote her sense of self. Elizabeth Freke (1642-1714) was a wealthy woman who lived much of her life in West Bilney, Norfolk. The main objects of Freke’s ambivalence were her relationships with her son and husband, whom she loved greatly but in whom she was bitterly and continually disappointed. It will be shown how Freke’s exercise of providentialism reinforced and further provoked that ambivalence, because instead of providing answers or clarity about her life – and these relationships – providence deepened her conflicted feelings with contradictory signs. Therefore, Freke’s case study can show us how the elasticity of providence, arising from the inherent mystery of the idea, could instill ambivalence and contradiction when what was sought was clarity and meaning. This potential state of ambivalence – of mixed or confused feelings, contradiction and double-thinking – serves as a reminder that providentialism was by its nature subjective, and the elasticity with which it was exercised allowed individuals to adapt and mould it in their writing.

Section 3.1. will explain how in its capacity to provide explanations providence could provoke perplexity, contradiction and indeed ambivalence. Providence could

help individuals make sense of their world, but because it was an opaque idea the number of interpretations of an event could be overwhelming, their meanings contradictory. The challenge for individuals was that providence was unknowable, and yet the exercise of providentialism was so elastic, so easily moulded. This tension between the unknowability of providence and the elasticity with which it was exercised was therefore an important dimension of the subjective experience of providentialism, and one that needs to be kept in mind throughout this thesis.

Section 3.2. provides a case study that explores this problem through the self-writing of Elizabeth Freke. Freke wrote commonplace books which contain her ‘remembrances’, which are the main source material analysed here. The case study will provide biographical context, discuss the composition of the text, and then advance a reconstruction of Freke’s subjective exercise of providentialism. It will illustrate how Freke’s perceptions of her money and status, infirmity and relationships were objects of ambivalent feelings, and how her providentialism, subjectively enacted through her remembrances, reinforced and further provoked these feelings.

The chapter then concludes in section 3.3. with the reflection that mixed feelings are sometimes the closest we can get to characterising the subjective experience of providentialism. Such a conclusion serves as a reminder that while the following chapters identify more distinctive modes of feeling, these need to be seen in light of this potential for contradiction and ambivalence. Furthermore, the findings of this chapter advance the argument made in this thesis that providentialism was by its nature subjective, and that the exercise of the belief involved, and provoked, distinct modes of feeling and informed how individuals perceived themselves.

3.1. The Mystery and Elasticity of Providence

In October 1667, young apprentice and diarist Roger Lowe (d.1679) had left the employ of one shopkeeper in Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, to enter the service of another, a Mr Thomas Peake. He found that Mrs Peake, however, was ‘of soe crosse a disposition’ that it ‘put me in a troubled condition’. Within a few months of joining the Peakes, in such a ‘strange ragion’ with ‘soe hott a climate as I know not howe T’enjoy my selfe, much more to live in peace’, we can see his diary entries dwindling with his worsening health, becoming scattered and inconsistent. As far as we know, the diary ended not long afterwards. Reflecting on this period of discomfort and strain he composed some verses in his diary, including the following:

Providence sees it good I tossd should be
Upon the waves of worldly miserie,
And tho I be thus fetterd in world’s greife
Providence will att last yeild me reliefe.
And this I’m sure: my faults have caused this;
Require not then – God doth nothing amisse.
My Soul, Frett not, be patiant but awhile;
That face now frownes will ere long on thee smile.¹

What Lowe communicates so effectively in these verses is the way that providence could seem to ‘smile’ or ‘frown’ upon individuals through mercies and judgements. Lowe had found a new position in the Peake’s shop, which was a ‘smileing providence’, but Mrs Peake’s ‘pestilentiaall nature’ was likely a ‘frowning providence’. His ‘sad affliction’, an illness lasting nine weeks, was probably a judgment of his faults, though his relief when ‘It pleased God to recover me’ was a mercy awarded for his patience throughout that affliction.² As Lowe’s verses suggest, reading personal

¹ William L. Sachse (ed.), *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-1674* (London, 1938), 36, 118-119.

² *Ibid.*, 119.

providences meant wavering between reassurance and sorrow, or both of these at once as demonstrated here in how Lowe could simultaneously attribute his relief and his miseries to providence.

This capacious explanatory system could accommodate life's contingency and randomness, all fortunes and misfortunes and every kind of adversity or triumph.³ As Lowe suggests, God's workings were fundamentally mysterious and yet in the vastness of the explanatory space created by that mystery there was room for any number of interpretations. As Keith Thomas puts it, the mystery of divine providence, combined with its capaciousness, meant that the belief was 'extraordinarily elastic'.⁴ Providence in early modern England, including the period studied here, therefore presented something of a paradox: providence could provide meaning to events through interpretation, but it was also fundamentally mysterious and opaque. Richard Harvey gives a sense of this problem by describing late seventeenth-century providence as 'paradoxically at once the chief mystery of that world and its chief explanation'.⁵ For example, as discussed in chapter 1, providence might be manipulated to prop up a political ideology or justify a particular course of action, be contested by opponents, and still be accepted by sides as an 'agreed concept'.⁶ The result of this paradox for individuals exercising providentialism was that interpretation could vary so widely, and their experience could be one of perplexity at the huge number of potential, contradictory interpretations. For this reason, Harvey suggests

³ Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD, 1996), 10-11.

⁴ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971; 1991), 95.

⁵ Richard Harvey, 'English Poverty and God's Providence, 1675-1725', *Historian*, 41, 3 (1979), 500.

⁶ Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), 32. See also sections 1.2., 1.3., above.

that we should not look too hard for consistency or comprehensiveness in how providential interpretations were applied and experienced.⁷

How individuals approached the mystery of providence, how they overcame this paradox, depended on the nature of their practice. As Ronald VanderMolen's study found, there was profound disagreement in the early seventeenth century over the extent to which events 'reveal[ed] the disposition of God; that is, does suffering indicate the wrath of God while happiness reflects God's favor?'⁸ Theoretically speaking, those adhering strictly to Calvin's doctrine would have rejected attempts to discern God's disposition and would insist that the only true revelation came from faith and scripture.⁹ This may well have been the theological premise formally underwriting much seventeenth-century English Protestant thought, but it was not strictly adhered to by all. On the contrary, many read events and history like a book of revelation, discerning God's favour of nations and his judgement of wrongdoers.¹⁰

Looking at the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jane Shaw suggests that for many the exercise of providentialism was a loose, imprecise practice, unhampered by the distinctions and restrictions of theological doctrine. In her study of miracle beliefs Shaw finds that while the theological distinction between providence and miracles was clear for theologians and scholars, and for the 'hotter sorts' of Protestants (miracles, unlike providence, did not necessarily denote divine judgement), 'the vast majority of people did not always make clear distinctions between providence,

⁷ Harvey, 'English Poverty', 512.

⁸ Ronald J. VanderMolen, 'Providence as Mystery, Providence as Revelation: Puritan and Anglican Modifications of John Calvin's Doctrine of Providence', *Church History*, 47,1 (1978), 28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰ See VanderMolen's examination of George Hakewill's and Thomas Beard's interpretation of providence, and how they veered away from Calvin's position. *Ibid.*, 27-47.

miracle, wonder and prodigy'.¹¹ She reminds us that we can draw distinctions 'too sharply for the majority of ordinary church-going people in England'.¹² Applied to providence the 'real diversity of belief and practice' meant that some dispensed with the strict doctrinal guidelines for divining personal providences and instead sought the direct divine messages carried in the events they experienced. Far from discouraging individuals from interpreting providences, the opacity of providence encouraged them to do so in an elastic and subjective manner.

With this elasticity of application came the potential for attributing providential significance to events in all manner of ways; providential interpretation could be contradictory and outwardly incoherent. Inwardly, however, contrasting interpretations, thoughts and feelings might co-exist, forming a multifaceted, complex model of how God was working in a life. This 'elastic' application of providence therefore brings us to the subjective experience and exercise of providentialism. It also brings us to what Thomas described as the 'self-confirming quality' of providence. He observed that 'once accepted' the theory could not be faulted, meaning that it could explain everything and anything.¹³ Combined with the use of what Genevieve Lloyd calls the 'imaginative force' of providence, the providential framework could allow for many (any) meanings to be attached to events, potentially creating a dizzying portrait of causation in an individual's life.¹⁴

¹¹ Though officially speaking the age of miracles had passed, Shaw explores the increase in miracle claims made in the late seventeenth century, Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (London, 2006), 32-3. See also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 230-2.

¹² Shaw, *Miracles*, 31, 33.

¹³ Thomas, *Religion*, 95.

¹⁴ Genevieve Lloyd, *Providence Lost* (London, 2008), 3.

The challenge for the individual applying this elastic idea was that the role of providence in events could be unclear.¹⁵ Smiling and frowning providences might occur together or in succession, or might not be easily characterised at all, giving confusing or seemingly conflicting signals. Providentialism was therefore rarely straightforward. The lack of clarity over what moral example was to be taken from events meant that, for some writers, discernment could occasion many feelings at once, anything from ‘anxiety, ambivalence ... [to] contradiction’.¹⁶

For example, Elizabeth Bury wrote in 1697 that ‘under Difficulties his Providence has led me into’, she could not ‘by all my Understanding, extricate my self’. Therefore, she would ‘cast my Care on him, believing his Power, and Wisdom, and Truth’, and ‘rely on his promised Direction, and humbly beg the Event in Mercy, not in Judgment’.¹⁷ Amidst adversity, like Lowe, Bury cited providence as both the source and the remedy of her suffering. The mystery of how providence was at work in her life challenged her human understanding and caused her to make contrasting interpretations, and plunged her into perplexity.

Some writers lauded the mysterious nature of providence, and asserted that any consequent perplexity was a valuable feature of good Christian practice, because it was a test of faith and trust in God. In 1672, Thomas Rokeby wrote to a grieving friend, Mr James Danby, with the advice that ‘the providences of God doe many times seem to us (poor dimsighted creatures) as having a dark side and we cannot understand them,

¹⁵ The tension between divine will and human comprehension is discussed in a nuanced case study in Patricia Patrick, “‘All That Appears Most Casuall To Us’: Fortune, Compassion, and Reason in Lucy Hutchinson’s Exploratory Providentialism”, *Studies in Philology*, 112, 2 (2015), 327-352, especially 331-3, 338, 339.

¹⁶ D. Leverenz, *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980), ix, 186, quoted in Tom Webster, ‘Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality’, *HJ*, 39, 1 (1996), 54.

¹⁷ Samuel Bury, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Elizabeth Bury* (1720), 140.

nor see that good is intended in them, when all the while they are the designs of love and goodness towards us'.¹⁸ To his sister-in-law he wrote further that 'our heavenly Father hath an unquestionable right to doe whatever He pleases with us', and that 'whatsoever He doth it is always best, however our blindness and unbelieve may hinder us from apprehending it to be soe'.¹⁹ For Rokeby, humans could not know the nature of providence, and that in such a state of unknowing only faith and humility under God's dispensations could lift the individual from the depths of despair.

Some fifty years later in September 1724 Hannah Housman echoed Rokeby's sentiments, reflecting that 'the Providences of God are various', that often 'we are lifted up, and sometimes cast down. Sometimes the World Smiles, and sometimes frowns'. Whether one was in receipt of smiles or frowns, one should remember that 'riches make to themselves Wings and fly away; Friends die, and *our* Lives are uncertain', but happy are those that 'have God for their Portion!'²⁰ Far from allowing the mystery of providence to engulf her in perplexity, Housman here proclaims that certainty and comfort can be won only in trusting that God and his providence was behind every event and circumstance.

These short examples suggest that providence's capacity to help individuals make sense of life's randomness, combined with the variety of interpretations available, could provoke many modes of feeling. This chapter is about how this tension between the opaqueness and elasticity of providence could render a state of ambivalence in the individual. It acknowledges that some authors, in their subjective experience of personal providentialism, sometimes created inconsistent interpretations of events and

¹⁸ J. Raine (ed.), *A Brief Memoir of Mr Justice Rokeby* (Surtees Soc. xxxvii, Durham, 1861), 19-20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁰ Richard Pearsall, *The Power and Pleasure of the Divine Life: Exemplify'd in the Late Mrs. Housman, of Kidderminster, Worcestershire. As extracted from her own papers* (1744), 60.

wrote about feeling conflicting emotions as a result. Feelings as diverse as Housman's comfort, Bury's perplexity, and Lowe's misery could be felt simultaneously because providence was so unknowable, and yet the exercise of the belief was so malleable. Furthermore, these writers' untidy application and experience of providence likely correlated with other complex and inconsistent features of personality and social relationships, something which reminds us to see providentialism in the context of other subjective experience. As we shall see, the ambivalence Elizabeth Freke felt towards wealth and status, infirmity, and family relationships, stemming partly from her own irascible and conflicted personality, was reciprocal to those ambivalent feelings she felt about the providences she observed, accounted and remembered.

Though it will be argued in later chapters that the subjective experience of providentialism could involve distinctive feelings, such as affliction, confidence, and contentment, it is important to first caution against the exaggeration of such emotional resonances, because the relationship between religion and emotion is not always clear nor necessarily indicative of meaningful experience.²¹ This is why an examination of this potential state of ambivalence and of the disorganised application of providence prefaces those chapters. The following case study will provide that examination and will also demonstrate the continuity of personal providentialism into the eighteenth century. It will illustrate why reconstructing the subjective experience of

²¹ For further discussion of this point see John Corrigan, 'Religion and Emotions', in S. J. Matt and P. N. Stearns (eds.), *Doing Emotions History* (Chicago, IL, 2014), 156-7, 158-9. See also Corrigan (ed.), *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretation* (New York, 2004) and 'History, Religion, and Emotion: An Historiographical Survey', in *idem.*, *Business of the Heart: Religion and Emotion in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), 269-280. On the role of emotion in religion see, Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, 1970); Clifford Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in Michael Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London, 1969), 8-12, and *Local Knowledge* (New York, 1983); Rodney Stark, 'Micro Foundations of Religion: A Revised Theory', *Sociological Theory*, 17 (1999), 264-89, cited in John Corrigan, 'Introduction', in *idem.* (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (Oxford 2008), 7.

providentialism c.1660-c.1720 requires accepting that ambivalence, contradiction or incoherence was sometimes the result of the exercise of this belief.

3.2. Elizabeth Freke (1642-1714)

Elizabeth Freke was born in January 1642 in the parish of St Margaret's Church, Westminster. She died at the age of seventy-three in 1714 and was also buried in Westminster, in the south aisle of the Abbey with two of her three younger sisters. She spent most of her life moving between London, County Cork in Ireland, Hannington Hall in Wiltshire, and the manor of West Bilney in Norfolk. The homes she inhabited in these places were the properties of her wealthy, gentrified family.

Elizabeth's mother Cicely was from a large and substantially propertied family, the Culpepers, the same family of the herbalist Nicholas Culpeper and Royalist supporters Sir Thomas and Sir John Culpeper.²² Elizabeth's 'deer father' Ralph Freke originated from Dorset and as a third son of ten children had inherited a portion of an estate valued at 100,000 pounds.²³ During Elizabeth's early years Ralph, a barrister, moved his family around England before building Hannington Hall with his younger brother Thomas, where their two families would live with Ralph's sister-in-law, the woman who Elizabeth claimed 'bred me up'.²⁴ This was a large household-family in which authority lay implicitly with her father Ralph Freke, being the elder brother and the male householder.²⁵ Hannington was the first and probably the most comfortable

²² See J. H. L. Booker, 'The Sussex Colepepers', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 47 (1904), 67-9, cited in Raymond A. Anselment (ed.), *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke, 1671-1714* (Camden Soc., 5th ser., xviii, Cambridge, 2001), 6.

²³ Freke frequently uses this endearment for her father, for instance, Anselment, *Remembrances*, 37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁵ See Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2009), 18-43.

and secure home that Elizabeth would ever have, as she appears to have had affectionate relationships with her father, aunt and sisters, having lost her mother in 1650. It also provided the model of comfortable surroundings and an ideal of family life against which she would measure her future familial happiness.²⁶

It is likely that Elizabeth and her younger sisters were educated by her aunt while at Hannington.²⁷ Looking at her sister Frances's publication *Applause of Virtue* in 1705, theirs was a classical education, including Latin and Greek, with a focus on moral and religious learning.²⁸ Frances married a gentleman of property, George Norton, who would later receive a knighthood and the Somerset manor of Abbots Leigh. Elizabeth's other two sisters made similar matches; Cicely married Sir George Choute, who inherited Surrenden Manor in Bethersden, Kent, and Judith married Robert Austen, second son of a baronet, who also had an estate in Tenterden in Kent. These were not manors and estates that brought the sisters great wealth but they were matches that gave them financial security, a degree of adult liberty and consolidated their position within the gentry of southern England.²⁹

Elizabeth's marriage was rather different to her sisters'. It is unclear where or when she met her husband, Percy Freke (b.c.1643), but it was probably in London or Hannington because he was Elizabeth's second cousin. Percy had grown up in Ireland, his family having settled there during his grandfather's life. Like Elizabeth's father, Percy's father Arthur Freke had registered at the Middle Temple before returning to Ireland to rent the castle of Rathbarry, south of Clonakilty in County Cork from the

²⁶ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 4-6.

²⁷ Harriet Blodgett (ed.), *The Englishwoman's Diary* (London, 1992), 28.

²⁸ Frances Norton, *Applause of Virtue, in Four Parts* (1705). Norton wrote these essays for her daughter, after her premature death. Her daughter had published, Grace Gethin, *Misery is Virtues Whet-Stone. Reliquiae Gethinianae* (1703). See also Mary Hays, *Fifty Famous Women: Their Virtues and Failings and the Lessons of Their Lives* (London, 1803), 209.

²⁹ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 9.

Earl of Cork's son-in-law. Percy then grew up in Ireland in a family as entrenched in the society of English Protestant gentry in southern Ireland as the Frekes and the Culpepers were in southern England.³⁰

Elizabeth claims their engagement was a secret for six or seven years. This was an unusual arrangement for the time because in the mid- and late- seventeenth century, matchmaking amongst the gentry and aristocracy continued to be subject to parental influence rather than being individuals' choice alone, as was the case for the lower orders.³¹ Elizabeth and Percy were first 'privately married' in Covent Garden in November 1672, then again in June 1673 at St Margaret's Church Westminster, this time with her father's knowledge and presumably at his insistence.³² Both days, Elizabeth later lamented, were 'grievous, tempestious, stormy' and 'rainy' days, conditions that 'prognosticated' and were 'fattall emblems to me' of her future misfortunes with her husband.³³ Percy appeared to offer less secure prospects than Choute, Norton, or Austen, having no university education and having left the Middle Temple without being called to the Bar.

The early years of their marriage were marred by a financial insecurity Elizabeth was unaccustomed to and they continued to be reliant on her father, who she memorialized as the most attentive and generous of men. In 1673 he had provided them with some security by giving Elizabeth a mortgage on property in Epping Forest, that she 'mightt nott bee disappointed of a subsistence for [her] life'. Percy, however,

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³¹ M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), 138.

³² A private marriage, though observant of the formalities as Percy had obtained a marriage licence on 23 June 1669 to Mrs Elizabeth Freke from St. Martin's in the Fields, Anselment, *Remembrances*, 8.

³³ Elizabeth Freke claimed both ceremonies occurred a year earlier in her remembrances, in 1671 and 1672 respectively. Anselment finds otherwise by looking at the records of the ceremonies, and the marriage licenses, in the parish registers for St. Paul's Church Covent Garden and St. Margaret's Westminster, which confirm the 1672 and 1673 dates. Anselment, *Remembrances*, 8, 37 n. 1-2.

in what would become a characteristic move, sold the mortgage without the knowledge of ‘niether my deer father, my selfe, or my 5 trustees’ for over five thousand pounds.³⁴ This meant that Elizabeth was ‘turned outt of doors and had nott a place to putt my unfortunat head ... and all my fortune, being in mony in a bankers hand, was in danger to be spentt by us or lost by him’.³⁵ Her concern was legitimate, as Percy ended up being ‘cheated’ in investments in Hampshire real estate.³⁶

Elizabeth wrote of these first three ‘unhappy’ years in London that she ‘never had, as I remember, the command of five pounds of my fortune. Wher I miscaried twice and had very little of my husbands company, which was no small grife to me, I being only governed by my affecttions in this my marrying and withoutt the consentt of any of my frinds’. In 1677, ‘fearing all my fortune would be spentt’, she joined Percy, leaving their new-born son Ralph at Hannington to pursue other opportunities in Cork.³⁷ Elizabeth returned eight months later, having miscarried once again, apparently having suffered the unkindness of her husband’s mother which was a shock to her, ‘never haveing had one unkind word from father in all my whole life’.³⁸ She would return to Ireland several times, by which time Percy had purchased the fortress of Rathbarry with what Elizabeth considered to be her money. They then spent the rest of the 1670s and early 1680s moving between London, Rathbarry and Hannington, during which time Freke writes that her father continued to support her financially, sending her sums of up to one hundred pounds with the express instruction that her husband not ‘medle’ with it, only to see him take it and put it to his own investments.³⁹

³⁴ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 9-10, 38, 212, 316.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11, 50.

Things changed considerably in April 1684 when Elizabeth's father died. The month before Percy had leased Rathbarry to tenant John Hull (who Elizabeth disliked) without Elizabeth's knowledge, meaning that she was 'immediattly thrown out of doors' and they lost half of their goods.⁴⁰ Any expectation of inheritance was quelled by the agreement made between her father and uncle to leave the Hannington property to Elizabeth's cousin. With Rathbarry leased and Hannington lost, Elizabeth was dependent on her sisters, as she had parted ways with Percy who returned to Ireland to pursue other interests. They would remain separated for the next sixteen months.

At this point Elizabeth's life became focused on a manor in west Norfolk. Having spent the best part of a year with her sisters and 'thus lefft by Mr Frek,' in September 1685 she determined 'again to seek my fortune to Billney, to seek my bread'.⁴¹ She travelled with her son to West Bilney, seven miles south of King's Lynn. Ralph Freke had purchased a mortgage on the Bilney manor from Lord Thomas Richardson for Robert Austen in 1676 as part of the marriage settlement for his youngest daughter Judith. Being removed from their lands in Kent however, Austen had sold it to Percy with Ralph's consent. Percy settled the manor on their son, held in trust by Elizabeth. She makes it clear that it was her father's kindness in providing this manor, not her husband's, for 'Mr Frek nott being stronge enough with my mony to pay for itt, my deer father lentt me neer a thousand pounds to compleatt the purchas for mee on my husbands bond', a loan which she says Percy refused to pay interest on.⁴² The manor was 2,700 acres, including common and warren land, yielding an annual rental income of 413 pounds. The Frekes could not claim the full income, however, due to a dower claim from the previous owner's widow. Lady Richardson would not die until 1698,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 43.

meaning that Elizabeth could not inhabit the manor hall, residing instead in a thatched house called Wassell Farm.⁴³

West Bilney was located in a thinly populated region of Norfolk, removed from the more prosperous central and north-eastern farming regions of the county and the large wealthy medieval city of Norwich with its textile industry. Situated between the towns of Swaffham and Downham Market on the fen-edge, yet distant from the thriving port of King's Lynn, this was an isolated place. Even in 1845, after the substantial population increase in nearby towns – Downham Market saw an increase of around 185 per cent between the early sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century – Bilney was still only described by William White as a 'small scattered village'.⁴⁴ Elizabeth lived at Wassell Farm in this small village until 1689, receiving only a few visits from Percy, at least one of which saw his attempt to force the sale of Bilney in exchange for land in Ireland, which Elizabeth refused. After this visit she writes that 'in greatt anger Mr Frek leftt me alone againe and wentt for Ireland, wher he staid from me allmost two years'.⁴⁵

In 1688 Percy became involved in the conflicts in Ireland that followed the arrival of William III. By 1692 he had regained Rathbarry, which had been lost during James II's occupation, and it was no longer occupied by its quarrelsome tenant John Hull. Percy now 'commanded' Elizabeth 'to leave all my affairs att Bilney and come over to Ireland'.⁴⁶ The move involved Percy and her now grown son Ralph fetching 'all my plate, linen, thre of my best beds, and all I had. ... Soe that of my eight years industry

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10-12.

⁴⁴ William White, *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Norfolk, and the City and County of the City of Norwich*; ... (1845; Trowbridge, 1969), 586. See the map of population distribution in 1674 in John Patten, 'Population Distribution in Norfolk and Suffolk During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geography*, 65 (1975), 60, also 49.

⁴⁵ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 55.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

heer at Billney I had nothing good now leftt mee'.⁴⁷ She then spent four and a half years at Rathbarry, during which time Percy was appointed high sheriff of County Cork, represented Clonakilty in the session of the Irish parliament in 1692, and where they shared in the hospitality of Cork families. Elizabeth, however, would look back on these years with disdain, for she spent 'most of the time very sick'. In 1696 she returned to Bilney, 'again to bare walls and every thing elce wanting'.⁴⁸ She would remain at Bilney for the rest of her life, joined by Percy from 1704 until his death in June 1706.

What Elizabeth felt towards her husband after these years of separation and conflict, how she saw her life through the lens of lost money and goods, how she negotiated living isolated in her later years in Bilney; these things are significant because they build a portrait of how ambivalence had begun to take hold of Freke's perceptions of her life and of herself. Overall, her writing communicates how frustration and bitterness joined the affections she held for her chosen partner when he fell short of her hopes and expectations. It is likely that those expectations had been guided – consciously or not – by the household-family she had grown up in: ordered and patriarchal in its structure but also large, comfortable and affectionate.

Furthermore, to a woman who placed worth in material goods and wealth, indicated by how closely she monitored her money, the unwise investment of her marriage settlement and the seizure of goods she had earned from her own industry was another source of resentment. We should not set her materialism against her affections, however, for this would be to remove their marriage from the context of ideals of the time. In this period instrumental and sentimental interests mostly

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

coincided in the contract of marriage, and affection did not preclude mutual material expectation.⁴⁹ If anything, the alignment of her material and sentimental expectations is why Freke's sense of abandonment and isolation was so pronounced. Her relationship with Percy was the first and foremost source of Elizabeth's ambivalence: this was the husband she had chosen to be the head of her family but also to whom she attributed her misfortunes and isolation.

It is important to note Freke's ambivalent feelings about her husband at this point because it was from 1702 at Bilney that she began writing her personal accounts in her commonplace books at the age of sixty. It is argued in this chapter, as it is throughout the thesis, that these individuals exercised and enacted their providentialism through the creative act of memory, in self-writing. To reconstruct the subjective experience of providentialism we need to understand as far as possible the conditions under which the individual wrote their account.

In Freke's remembrances we can see her seizing the role of the remembering subject and observe how her creative act of choosing, moulding, and cutting her memories was simultaneously her exercise of providentialism. We can also see how, in her later years, she formed a sense of self around the experiences of financial struggle, infirmity, and isolation. These were all states that providence had wrought; these were miseries that 'her God' had wrought. Simultaneously, however, 'her God' never left her. His providence defended her causes, helped her subsist and comforted her in her misery.⁵⁰ Freke's subjective experience of providentialism – a very personal providentialism – was therefore one imbued with ambivalence.

⁴⁹ Tadmor, *Family*, 28, and see Ingram, *Church Courts*, 136-42.

⁵⁰ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 74-5.

Her case study thus advances the argument made in this thesis, that individuals were enacting and exercising their providentialism through self-writing and that doing so influenced their feelings and self-perception. It also demonstrates how individuals continued to practice personal providentialism into the eighteenth century. Furthermore, her case study highlights the subjective nature of this idea because Freke could manipulate and adapt it in her remembrances. The rest of this section will illustrate more specifically how Freke applied providence to her life, how her application involved and reinforced her ambivalent feelings. This begins, however, with an understanding of the instrument of her exercise of providentialism, the vehicle through which she observed, accounted and remembered: her remembrances.

The source material used to recover Elizabeth Freke's providentialism in this chapter is supplied by Raymond Anselment's edition of Freke's two personal accounts – her 'remembrances' – drawn from her two commonplace books. These two volumes are part of a collection of five manuscripts bequeathed to the British Library by Lady Mary Carbery in 1941.⁵¹ Carbery had also published an edition of Freke's account in 1913, though Anselment's volume is different in presenting each of the remembrances separately rather than abridged in one chronological narrative.⁵² His edition is of Add. MS. 45718, a white vellum-bound volume of 245 folios, and Add. MS. 45719, a smaller volume covered in a brown paper of just 53 folios. The white volume (Add.

⁵¹ Relevant manuscripts are the following: BL, Add. MS. 45718, 'Freke Papers. Vol. I. Commonplace Book of Elizabeth Freke, begun not earlier than Sept. 1684 (see f.ii) and continued down to Feb. 1714'; Add. MS. 45719, 'Freke Papers. Vol. II. Second commonplace book of Elizabeth Freke, containing a revised version of the autobiographical memoir in Add. MS. 45718'; Add. MS. 45720, 'Freke Papers. Vol. III. Geographical and historical notes written by Elizabeth Freke, apparently in 1669'; Add. MS. 45721 A, 'Freke Papers. Vol. IV. Miscellaneous correspondence and papers of: - (1) Elizabeth Freke; 1697-1713, ff. 1-7; - (2) Mary, Lady Carbery, rel. to her researches on Elizabeth Freke, etc.'; Add. MS. 45721 B, 'Freke Papers. Vol. V. A Pedigree, or Genealogye, of the Family of the Frekes for near 200 years, first begun by Ralph Freke, of Hannington, Esq.... reduced to this form by William Freke, of Hinton St Mary, ... July ye 14th 1707', cited in Anselment, *Remembrances*.

⁵² Mary Carbery (ed.), *Mrs. Elizabeth Freke Her Diary, 1671 to 1714* (Cork, 1913). See critique of the Carbery edition, Anselment, *Remembrances*, 2.

MS. 45718) is a commonplace book containing hundreds of recipes for cures, preventatives and remedies transcribed from medical works such as her kinsman Nicholas Culpeper's herbal.⁵³ It also contains inventories, transcribed letters, and 'emblems for my own reading' such as excerpts of scripture or newspapers and pamphlet accounts of current events and public addresses.⁵⁴ The shorter brown volume (Add. MS. 45719) is another commonplace book, including details and lists of rents, deeds and other financial information.⁵⁵

Both volumes contain an account of the money Freke spent during her husband's fatal illness and, as she titled them, 'Some few remembrances of my misfortuns [which] have attended me in my unhappy life since I were married, which was November the 14, 1671'.⁵⁶ Anselment's edition includes these and miscellaneous documents from both volumes such as Freke's inventories of her household goods, accounts of her income and rents from Bilney, and money she had lent to her husband. He has omitted the medical material and some of the accounts, but presents the remembrances (1671-1714) as an accessible piece of autobiographical writing and in a format that allows for comparison between the two versions, making it a useful and ready resource for this study.

Although we can date neither account precisely, Freke gives indications that she began the white text first, most likely around 1702. Anselment asserts that she possibly wrote from notes of her first thirty years of marriage, whereas the handwriting suggests that the 'substantial' entries after 1702 were written soon after the events took place.⁵⁷ Freke began this first version of her remembrances at the age of sixty and she

⁵³ Nicholas Culpeper, *The English Physitian* (1652), reprinted as *The Complete Herbal* (1653).

⁵⁴ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 133, 154.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁶ See titles *Ibid.*, 37, 211.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

continued to write them until February 1714, just months before she died. The entries can vary in frequency from several in a month, to one every three to six months. Unless recording a close series of events, such as travelling or a dispute with a tenant, she did not record consecutive days. The entries principally record her travels, family developments, her management of Bilney, notable or national events, her disputes with family, tenants and business acquaintances, accidents, injuries and illnesses, and her purchases and money she lent or was owed.

In 1712, aged seventy, Freke began rewriting these remembrances in the brown volume.⁵⁸ The narrative begins on the same date as the other text, her first marriage to Percy, though it is shorter than the first because letters and transcribed excerpts have been omitted. Freke continued to write the first version (the white text) whilst composing this second account (the brown text), which is visible in fuller entries for the period 1712-13 in the white text, and how it continues for ten more months than the brown text.⁵⁹ Some entries from the white text were not transferred over. Others were, either shortened or polished, or filled out with more detail. The major difference between the two is that the brown text was begun after Freke had experienced widowhood and the neglect of her son, and so her reflections on her forty years of marriage and misery changed considerably.

It is difficult to gauge why or for whom Freke was writing; as discussed in chapter 2, writers had many reasons to compose an account. Freke appears introspective in her remembrances and they have a spiritual quality, but this is not a spiritual diary. If

⁵⁸ We know this date because she cites the forty years since her marriage to Percy in 1672, at the beginning of the account. Anselment, *Remembrances*, 2, 212.

⁵⁹ Though calling them version one and two might be clearer, it would be misleading because though one was begun after the other, during the years 1712-14 they were kept simultaneously. Anselment also settles on calling Add. MS. 45718 'the white text', and Add. MS. 45719 'the brown text'. Anselment, *Remembrances*, 2.

anything it more closely resembles a personal chronicle. Although Freke made no explicit address to ‘posterity’ as some writers did in their chronicles, there are implicit indications that she anticipated a readership, as many self-writers did. She demonstrates a sensitivity to posterity when she berates her son in a letter from 1706 for having mistreated her, but wrote her main concern to be the ‘injury’ he thereby did to his own ‘self and posterytye’.⁶⁰ Anselment finds a clearer implication of who she was writing for in a warning in her account of expenses relating to Percy’s fatal illness in the brown text: that ‘this is the usuage I have had in Norfolk; therefore, son, take heed and beware of my fate’.⁶¹ Together, her sensitivity to posterity and this direct address to her son suggest that she envisaged an audience for her writings, albeit a restricted audience of family. This prevents us from considering these remembrances as entirely private and reminds us that an element of performance may be a feature of her writing.

Performance, or more specifically the presentation of testimony, is reflected in how Freke often completed her entries by signing her name. This can be ‘Elizabeth Freke’, ‘Eliz Freke’, ‘Eli Freke, or just ‘EF’.⁶² Sometimes this signature follows accounts of transactions or slights, such as ‘this was very unkind usuage butt the best I have had in the family, as I am E Freke’.⁶³ At other times it accompanies the acknowledgment of God’s mercy, such as here: ‘for which mercy the greatt God make me ever thankfull and grantt I may never forgett his goodness to me whilst I am Eliz Freke’.⁶⁴ The signing of her name seems to be an act of testament or an ‘assertion of ownership’ over the content, making the entry read like a testimonial of truth directed

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 303, and for accounts of expenses 289-304.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 47, 66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

at the reader, as in phrases like ‘this is my true and miserable hart fate. Eliz Frek’, of simply, ‘This is true. Eliz Freke’.⁶⁵ Whatever the intention behind them, these signatures were a clear inscription of self-writing.

The composition of the remembrances within the commonplace books exemplifies some of the findings of chapter 2. For example, they illustrate how early modern personal accounts resisted fixed boundaries between textual forms, a resistance shown in how the remembrances were likely started from journalistic memoranda. Freke’s self-writing therefore supports Sara Heller Mendelson’s observation that ‘seventeenth-century memoirs had not yet crystallized into their modern-day forms’ and works could slip between journals, memoranda to memoir.⁶⁶ A similar point is observed by Elspeth Graham, that the ‘fluidity’ of these texts is significant, not in foretelling what ‘form’ that writing would become in the future but what it reflects of the instability of the time in which it was written.⁶⁷ The multifaceted nature of the commonplace books suggests that Freke’s writing was not just focused on textual coherence, but on utility; Freke used the volumes to shape, order, and inscribe the many areas of her life and character. It is, therefore, a fluid text, even an unstable one, rather than being the site of the unified narrative associated with modern autobiography.

Seen in the context of her commonplace books, Freke’s remembrances also illustrate Skura’s observation that self-writing could form ‘part of some other occasion’, and Smyth’s observations that ‘textual records of lives [which] were

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 61, 246; Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), 135.

⁶⁶ Sara Heller Mendelson, ‘Stuart Women’s Diaries and Occasional Memoirs’, in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (London, 1985), 181-2, cited in Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women’s Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge, 2006), 7.

⁶⁷ Elspeth Graham, ‘Women’s Writing and the Self’, in Helen Wilcox (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1996), 212, cited in Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, 7.

experiments and improvisations with other available forms'.⁶⁸ Smyth's chapter on the commonplace book is useful for understanding the wider setting of Freke's remembrances, describing them as 'overwhelmingly, messier texts'.⁶⁹ Their writers tended to treat genres as 'loose, tentative, and negotiable – as momentary frames for holding a text together', meaning that they could slide into other textual forms, such as journal, diary, memoir.⁷⁰

Of the several traits Smyth attaches to 'commonplace book culture', there are several that can highlight characteristics of Freke's volumes.⁷¹ Most obviously, Freke demonstrates 'a willingness to rework material; a tendency to cut, add, or alter text', and 'a resistance to ideas of coherent, completed wholes; and so a kind of restlessness, a constant sense of imminent augmentation, reinvention, modification'.⁷² The status of a commonplace book as something 'continually modified' reflects the creative spirit that underwrites Freke's remembrances. Comparing the two versions of the remembrances also gives the impression that her gaze upon her own text was restless, seeming to look backward and forward with a desire to collect and shape anew. That restlessness also reflects the 'backwards with the forward gaze' described by Wiener

⁶⁸ Meredith Anne Skura, *Tudor Autobiography: Listening For Inwardness* (London, 2008), cited in Smyth, *Autobiography*, 7-8, quoted at 2.

⁶⁹ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 123.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 124-25. See also, Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford, 1996); Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT, 2001); Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ, 1993); William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, MA, 1997), 60-65, and *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008), 127-48; Peter Beal, 'Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book', in W. Speed Hill (ed.), *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts* (New York, 1993), 131-47; Joan Marie Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplace* (New York, 1962); Richard Yeo, 'Notebooks as Memory Aids: Precepts and Practices in Early Modern England', *Memory Studies*, 1 (2008), 115-36; Robert Darnton, 'Extraordinary Commonplaces', *The New York Review of Books* (21 December 2000), 82-7.

⁷¹ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 127.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 128-29.

and Rosenwald because Freke's collections of her past seemed to have been felt in the present, but also designed to be re-lived in the future.⁷³

The challenge posed by a first-person narrative that is constantly modified like Freke's is that it appears unstable, and its subject unresolved. Such a reaction perhaps stems from a modern preoccupation rather than an early modern one, a desire to locate in autobiography evidence of a clear, unified, differentiated, individualistic self. A self that appears malleable, that shifts with each retelling jars with modern ideas of what personal identity and selfhood should look like. A constantly modified personal account suggests multiple selves which, in comparison to the modern self, may seem inauthentic and therefore does not meet 'our craving for robust records of a single individual'.⁷⁴ This reaction misses the point; while Freke's remembrances are to some extent 'fictive texts' they yet still provide an insight into her individual subjectivity, which appears to have been varying and multifaceted. In seeing how she cut away memories by omitting or deleting content, or reshaped them by sticking on phrases and parentheses, we can also see the subjective utility of these texts.

Freke's remembrances were both the process and product of 're-membering', of pulling apart and putting back together. They therefore provide a picture of a writer 'at work', of an individual creatively collecting herself through an act of memory; more specifically, an act of personal dismemberment and then of reassembly, over and again. By writing the remembrances Freke created a writing self and a written self, and she then replicated that process again, re-living those events emotionally. As she inscribed and re-inscribed this self in her remembrances she also creatively re-

⁷³ Wendy J. Wiener and G. C. Rosenwald, 'A Moment's Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary', in T. L. Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (Abingdon, 2007), iv, 82-4.

⁷⁴ See Smyth's discussion of authenticity, *Autobiography*, 130.

moulded her perception and application of providence in the events of her life. Her subjective exercise of providentialism was then inserted and moulded, studied and reformed as she wrote and re-wrote. The subjective utility and construction of the remembrances, themselves imitative and constitutive of her inner life, were therefore reciprocal to the subjective utility and experience of her providentialism.

Having explained where Freke was exercising her providentialism this section will now focus on how and where she applied providence. This is an aspect of Freke's writing which receives little attention from Anselment, presumably because the remembrances appear most relevant to histories of medicine, materialism and female household administration. In his introduction he asserts that Freke had none of the 'traditional piety' of comparable women writers such as Alice Thornton.⁷⁵ Actually, 'traditional piety' would be an apt description of Freke's religiosity. Her education does not appear to have emphasised puritan learning, though her sister's 1705 publication contains a section on 'The Blessedness of Resting on Providence' and 'Of the Omnipresence of God' so we can assume that the Freke sisters received instruction in scriptural and devotional literature.⁷⁶ We can see Freke's continuing investment and interest in religious literature in her 1711 inventory of possessions where she lists over one hundred books, about half of which concerned religious or devotional subjects.⁷⁷

Freke worshipped in the Church of England and placed great importance on receiving the sacrament, even more so when in the parish church at Bilney, St.

⁷⁵ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 1.

⁷⁶ Norton, *Applause of Virtue*, 80-1, 139-42.

⁷⁷ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 173-77. Freke's collection embraces history, poetry, memoirs, herbals and books of surgery, manuals of husbandry and law. She thus partook in the growing consumerism of books, see J. H. Plumb, 'The Public, Literature and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century', in P. Fritz and D. Williams (eds.), *The Triumph of Culture: Eighteenth-Century Perspectives* (Toronto, 1972); Naomi Tadmor, "'In the Even My Wife Read to Me": Women, Reading and Household Life in the Eighteenth Century', in James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), 162-174.

Cecilia's.⁷⁸ When the incumbent of Bilney manor Lady Richardson died in 1698, Freke funded and directed the restoration of the church, of which she was now patron.⁷⁹ After Percy's death, however, her refusal to acknowledge the Bishop of Norwich's authority over 'her' church resulted in a bitter feud with the chancellor of Norwich, Thomas Tanner, who excommunicated her in 1713.⁸⁰ Her reaction was to remove her 'plate and whatt elce I had given itt', proclaiming 'now I hope I am rid of all the spirittual black coats. Butt the key of the church I keep to my selfe'.⁸¹ Thus Freke's religiosity was a highly personalised interpretation of piety; devout in her own way and engaged with devotional literature, conformist insofar as she worshipped within the Anglican church throughout her life, but so decided in her convictions as to alienate ecclesiastical authorities by the end of it.

Freke's providentialism was also highly personalised, and her remembrances give us an insight into the subjective power of this opaque and elastic framework and how it could shape perceptions of selfhood. It will be argued here that, first, Freke's remembrances give us an example of the continuity of personal providentialism into the eighteenth century. Second, it will be argued that Freke's subjective experience of providentialism corresponded to her perceptions of three key areas of her life: her money and possessions, her infirmity, and her family relationships. These interdependent perceptions were imbued with mixed feelings, and so when she discerned providence guiding events in these areas her providential interpretation

⁷⁸ For example, Anselment, *Remembrances*, 197.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 72-3, 110.

⁸⁰ See Freke's disputes with Tanner *Ibid.*, 111-27. The description of St. Cecilia's as 'her' church can be seen on a Book of Common Prayer gifted to the church by Freke in 1710. On the frontispiece it reads, 'The Gift of Elizabeth Freke to Her Church of West Bilney'. See information and images of the book here, 'Freke Prayer Book', East Winch & West Bilney Community Project, <http://www.eastwinchandwestbilney.co.uk/personal-vignette/bilney-vignette/elizabeth-freke/freke-prayer-book> (accessed 2 December 2017).

⁸¹ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 208-9.

followed similarly contradictory pathways. Her remembrances therefore show how the elasticity of this mysterious providence could accommodate these contradictions, thereby deepening her ambivalence. To explain these arguments the rest of this section will discuss the kind of ‘typical’ invocations of providence in the remembrances, the kind of utterances that might be overlooked as ‘mere literary decoration’.⁸² It will then move onto how providence featured in each of those three areas, thereby reconstructing Freke’s subjective experience of providentialism.

Many of Freke’s invocations of providence are typical of the kind of providential expression found in personal accounts of the kind described in chapter 2. She acknowledges the providential temporal backdrop of her existence, of time being God’s invention and instrument rather than her own, as seen in this excerpt from 1 January 1712:

New Years Day and my unhappy birth day I have by Gods permission, and goodness to mee fully accomplished the seventieth yeare of my age. For which I doe most humbly thank him and begg whatt longer time he gives me of life may by me, Elizabeth Frek, [be] spentt in thankfullness and to my Gods glory and in his service.⁸³

She also invokes providence in entries describing her health and illness, such as the divine mercy she received during the birth of her son in June 1675. In a lengthy account in the brown text she describes how she suffered through four or five days of labour under the care of four midwives (one was a male) who ultimately agreed that ‘my son should be taken in peices from mee on ther conciderration I cold not live an howr longer’. Then, ‘whilst the man was putting on his butchers habbitt’, ‘my greatt God thatt never failed mee (or deneyed me my reasonable request) raised me up a

⁸² Blair Worden, ‘Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England’, *P&P*, 109 (1985), 55.

⁸³ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 190.

good woman midwife'. This Mrs Mills worked for three hours and 'by Gods providence and mercy to mee I was saffly delivered'. Providence intervened further, because though her son was 'a dead child hurtt with severall great holes in his head' God then 'raised him up by life to mee'.⁸⁴ From this account we can see that Freke did not refrain from observing and accounting the direct intervention of God in her life. We can see, then, that she was exercising her personal providentialism in these texts.

This personal providentialism extends into her observations of her environment. In the winter of 1710-11, when she was especially vulnerable and confined to a chair, she wrote that 'it was Gods greatt mercy I was nott burnt to death' when her 'head caught on fire' while she was reading. This near-fatal experience was followed by another when a burning chimney nearly collapsed onto her and her guests at a New Year's Day dinner- 'I were like againe to bee burnt to death ... Butt by Gods providence and the help of my tennants and company, I were carried away in my chaier, to which I have bin confined now a prisoner neer eighteen monthes'.⁸⁵ Her accounts of falls are equally perilous, such as one in 1704, when falling down the stairs she was stunned for such a time as 'I were as dead'. She lost several teeth 'roots and all, into my hand', 'my head and face against the wall bruised to peices, my back to all judgmentt allmost brok, and the cupp of my leftt knee brok'. She writes that she had been 'forewarn'd' of this fall in a dream, though 'my good and mercyfull God has restored me againe to life'.⁸⁶ God similarly intervened in Freke's world to ensure her safe travel, particularly her journeys to and from Ireland, which warranted especial comment for they were the handiwork of 'providentiall mercy'.⁸⁷ Her personal

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 60, 65, 160-61, 189, 236, 218.

providentialism therefore encompassed invocations relating to her health, her existence in time, and interactions with the environment.

Freke's providentialism could also extend into broader observations. She recorded national providences and commented with approval that on the fifteenth of November 1688 'the good prince of Orang, King William the Third, came over outt of Hollond to be our deliverer from popery and slavery', that 'God sentt him when wee were just past all hopes'.⁸⁸ She would also not hesitate to observe providence at work in others' lives, and insist on their duty to observe them. In March 1713, she upbraided her son by asking 'iff hee had had not latly received mercyes enough from God', that he had been delivered from storms whilst at sea and that all three of his sons were 'preserved by Gods providence'. Ralph Freke's reply that 'I talked to him as iff her were butt eighteen years of age' suggests that the breadth of her providential outlook was not welcomed by all.⁸⁹

These typical invocations of providence, arising from interactions with accidents, illness or personal difficulties, expressed through typical utterances such as 'by God's mercy', demonstrate that Freke was practicing a conventional form of personal providentialism.⁹⁰ Her account therefore provides a sense of the continuity of this providential thought into the eighteenth century, held by a member of the generation born in the 1640s who grew up amidst the providential 'interpretative excesses' of the Civil War and Interregnum period.⁹¹ This first finding confirms that in this period when providence was being reconfigured, personal providentialism continued to be

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 227. Her interpretation of 1688 therefore corroborates Tony Claydon's observations of national providentialism in William III's reign, see Claydon, *William III*, 32, also Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s* (Oxford, 1999), 203-4.

⁸⁹ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 198.

⁹⁰ Worden, 'Providence', 55.

⁹¹ Winship, *Seers*, 3.

practiced at an individual level, and continued to play a role in how some educated social elites viewed themselves within the world.

To recover how Freke's providentialism was experienced subjectively more detailed examination is required of how she used the idea of providence, and how it appeared in the context of her inner life. This means looking at three interlinked areas of concern, the facets of Freke's life that most fundamentally informed her experience and personal identity: money, possessions and status, infirmity, and her family relationships.

Freke's perceptions of wealth, possessions, transactions and status were complicated. As described above, the relative financial security of her life before and after marriage probably changed her perceptions of her marriage, but also of her money and status. Her expectations about subsistence and wealth were wrapped up in ideals of gender and marriage; as a woman her marriage was her entrance into 'adult privilege' and the point at which she expected to assume the position of being a 'mistress' of a family and a household.⁹² Instead of progressing through the 'recognised stations' of 'maid, wife, mother', 'widow, dowager and grandmother', in a 'stately progress', her intermittent marital separation challenged those expectations, and brought a different and unexpected kind of liberty and responsibility.⁹³ With that responsibility came a necessary engagement with administration and management of her property and wealth.

Anselment notes how Freke's degree of materialism and worldliness was unusual, that her 'rare awareness' of property rights is 'seldom found in earlier women's diaries

⁹² Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London, 2009), 210, 291; Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter* (London, 1998), 160.

⁹³ Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 8.

and memoirs'.⁹⁴ Freke detailed Chancery suits over mortgages and settlements, commented on East India stock, and buying 'estate in the parliamentt funds of the exchequer'.⁹⁵ She was a worldly woman thoroughly engaged with the mechanics of financial transaction and exchange. Perhaps Anselment's comment on the 'unusualness' of this worldliness stems from arguments about how genteel women in the seventeenth century withdrew from public life and work, into the private sphere of domesticity and leisure.⁹⁶ Regardless as to whether her engagement with tenancy law, financial management and agrarian husbandry grew out of necessity from her marital separation, Freke demonstrates through her public female agency either resistance against or the weakness of this argument.

Seen in the context of her insecurity due to her husband's absence, however, and the need 'to shiff for my selfe', Freke's materialism takes on a different hue.⁹⁷ She continued to be generous throughout her life, recording many substantial gifts to her relations.⁹⁸ But she also appears to have become completely preoccupied by her possessions and money. Anselment suggests that money was the source of both 'conflict and security', 'a measure of self-definition amidst isolation, sickness, and insecurity'.⁹⁹ Part of that measuring, he suggests, is reflected in how in the white text Freke records the contents of every trunk, chest, box and closet, of every room, including the back and milk houses, and her clothes, linen, china and 'delph', books,

⁹⁴ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 3.

⁹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 114, 123, 314, 316, 319; 71, 75, 240, 241, 276; 78.

⁹⁶ See Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. A. L. Erickson (1919; London, 1992); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), 396-7; Susan D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988); Tadmor, 'In the Even', 162-174; Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 2-6; Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *HJ*, 36, 2 (1993), 383-414.

⁹⁷ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 59.

⁹⁸ For example, *Ibid.*, 81, 84, 93, 95,

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

bottles of spices and wine.¹⁰⁰ Her reasons for making the inventory were that in October 1711 she was to travel down to London ‘by Gods permission’, and believing that she would ‘never returne againe home alive’ she made an inventory ‘of some of the best things I leave in my house att Billney’.¹⁰¹ Her mortality and worth were tied to what she owned.¹⁰² It is due to her many lists and inventories that Harriet Blodgett dubbed her the ‘queen of recorders’.¹⁰³ Certainly it seems that holding onto her money, status and rights became vitally important in the years she was writing the remembrances, from the age of 60 to her death at 73.

Freke’s experience and exercise of providentialism reflected her perception of what was hers, firstly in how providence was often invoked as ‘my great and good God, which never yett left me’.¹⁰⁴ She discerned ‘Gods mercy to Eliz Frek’ in her father’s ‘bounty and goodness to mee’, and notably in her own ‘industry’ for she was ‘blest with my Gods dayly mercyes to me nott only in the blesings of children butt thatt I am able to see a subsistence settled on them before I dye’.¹⁰⁵ Such acknowledgements of providence working in economic matters was not unusual, as Waddell’s recent study has shown; he illustrates how providence reinforced ideas about ownership and ‘stewardship’, and how the idea of a God holding ‘bounty in one hand and wrath in the other’, ‘helped to sustain the more general belief that social ethics were likely to be enforced’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 164-188.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁰² For discussions of early modern perceptions of what ‘one was worth’ see Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2015).

¹⁰³ Blodgett, *Centuries*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 74-5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁰⁶ Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012), 56.

There was nothing general about how Freke perceived the providential enforcement of her economic interests, however. In disputes with tenants and neighbours in Norfolk and Ireland she asserts that providence assured her triumphs over her enemies. For example, when describing how she was forced out of Rathbarry in 1684 to make way for tenant John Hull, she writes in the white text how she left ‘God to avenge my cause’, ‘which he did, for in 3 or 4 years King James came for Ireland and seised by the Irish all he had and gave away our estate to Owen Macarty’.¹⁰⁷ In the white text she writes that Hull’s loss of the house ‘brok his hartt’, which was perhaps not revenge enough for Freke, for in the brown text she added ‘God revenged my cause on this bruitt Hull’, in depriving his wife and family of subsistence, and in ensuring that ‘Hee lyes buryed there with one of his children in the open partt of the church of Rathbarry amongst the common Irish to his etternal infamy’.¹⁰⁸

Her vengeance, exercised through her observation and account of providence, is also clear in her account of her 1691 trial at the ‘sesions of Linn’ against Captaine Spillman, with his ‘two Norwich lawyers and about sixteen behind him ... against me in Mr Freks absence’. ‘I had not one to appeare fore me of my side’, she writes, ‘butt my greatt God and my son, about 17 years of age’, ‘and God gave itt of my side’.¹⁰⁹ Providence wrought a similar feat against Charles Turner of Linn in 1707, who having charged the bailiffs to seize her goods, Freke writes,

to God I made my complaint, who signally lett me see his justice and goodness to mee in the fall of my enimise. For Charls Turner, soon affter he came from the asises, his eye dropt outt of his head on his book and his wife dyed from him; and not long affter God took him away to accountt for his perjury.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

In those accounts relating to her money and possessions, then, Freke was eager to observe and account the ruthless and vengeful interventions of providence on her behalf. This was certainly a very personal providentialism. It might not appear consolatory to external eyes, but through her subjective practice Freke was perceiving a kind of mercy and comfort that in her isolation she yearned for. This is the first important facet of how providentialism was shaping how she perceived herself in her old age: set apart from greedy and vicious neighbours she had the special protection of God.

Freke's sense of isolation grew not only out of her separation from her husband and her son, but also from her infirmity. This is the second area of her life that we can see providence working in outwardly incoherent ways, and also an area that increasingly shaped her experience and perception of herself. Bearing in mind that within this culture the age of 60 seems to have been the threshold of 'old age', Freke was writing as an elderly woman.¹¹¹ By about 1711 she was severely immobilised by asthma and sometimes from ulcers on her legs and body, and so the final years of the white text and the whole of the brown text were written in the context of a condition that she describes thus:

28. 1 Jan 1712: affter [I] have laine about five yeares in the tortter of a tissick and the severall distempers which dayly atend itt, nott able the least to help my selfe butt as lifted by two of my servants and noe frind neer me butt all cheats.¹¹²

Anselment sees her suffering as responsible for her preoccupation with possessions and the paranoid insistence that 'enemise' were out to get her.¹¹³ Blodgett characterises

¹¹¹ Susannah Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2004), 59. Freke features in Ottaway's study at 49, 59, 91, 132, 145, 147, 159, 163.

¹¹² Anselment, *Remembrances*, 190.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

her remembrances as the ‘receptacle for an increasingly disturbed personality, whose diary apparently did not keep her entirely sane’.¹¹⁴ Freke described herself as ‘diseased, malloncholly, [and] aged’; from this we can construe that her illness was not only of a physical nature, but also mental and emotional because melancholy was an emotional, psychological and physical condition.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Anselment states that ‘her physical and emotional well-being are not always easily distinguishable’, and that her trouble with ‘vapours’ points to the non-physical aspect of her suffering.¹¹⁶ From Freke’s perspective, her ‘continuall misery’ was couched in providential terms and can be summarised in her phrase ‘laboureing under the hand of a mercyfull God’.¹¹⁷ This phrase communicates the ambivalence Freke felt about her infirmity and the providence that had caused it; God was merciful for he appeared to intervene in her life, but she laboured and suffered under that attention. Her suffering added to her feelings of isolation, meaning that the self she was writing and re-writing was one besieged by miseries that became further reinforced by her physical frailty.

The third area of Freke’s life where we can observe providence reinforcing her ambivalence is in her perceptions of her family relationships. As discussed above, her relationship with Percy was the primary source of ambivalence in her life, the spouse she had selected but who was the cause of her misfortunes. Further to the problems caused by financial concerns and her feelings of abandonment, she argues that had it not been for his separation from her to Ireland and his subsequent demands she join him there in 1692 she would not have stayed in that ‘miserable place ... frightened out of my witts for above three [four] years and a halfe and sick all the time ... And

¹¹⁴ Blodgett, *Centuries*, 83-4.

¹¹⁵ For discussion of melancholy see chapter 6, below.

¹¹⁶ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

tho seventeenth year past, I still labour under all the misfortunes of itt'.¹¹⁸ Freke therefore collapsed her perceptions of her illness and infirmity into her perceptions of her relationship with Percy.

It is clear that Freke considered her husband to be in marked contrast to her father, who she characterised as devoted, generous and the epitome of security, and who she set as the standard by which all others were measured, to their detriment and censure.¹¹⁹ After Percy's death in 1706, however, a painful and drawn out illness, Freke's tone towards him changes significantly.¹²⁰ She rewrites her memory of him, and seemingly her feelings too; by 1712 Freke describes the day of her 'deer husbands death' as 'the fattalles day of my unhappy life'.¹²¹ The remembrances thus exercised and memorialized her resentment against her husband, the source of her physical, financial and emotional miseries, but also her affection. They are a monument to her ambivalence, and her conflicting interpretations of providence only add to that mode of feeling.

After Percy's death Freke's resentment found a different object: her son. Ralph also failed to meet the standard set by her father. In the account of April 1684 relating the death of her 'deer, deerst father' in the white text, she closes the entry with a plea: 'I doe most humbly beg of God thatt as I have a blesing of a son thatt carries his name, [he] may likewise his age [and] character follow his example in life and death'.¹²² In the re-shaped entry in the brown text, written after 1712 and six years into widowhood, this plea regarding her son has been cut. Only her father's memory is enshrined there

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 23, 157.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 50-1.

whereas her son's presence is deleted, struck off.¹²³ The reason for this change of heart was that Percy had bequeathed the rents from the Irish lands to Elizabeth. Ralph, being in Ireland and close to the income but distant from his mother, did not meet this agreement. Elizabeth's cousin John Freke held her power of attorney and was instructed to collect what was due, but then also failed to do his 'duty'. In total Elizabeth considered herself cheated of over 3,000 pounds.¹²⁴ Consequently, she expressed betrayal by both John Freke and her son in the years following Percy's death in 1706. In the brown text, she wrote the following of Spring 1707:

God forgive all falce frinds. For this yeare was a dreadfull yeare to me as ever poor mortall ever underwentt, being i707. My distractions for Mr Freke rendered me a mark for all the rogues and knaves of this country; and those frinds I most trusted most deceived me, besids my own sons undutifulness to me, which after the loss of Mr Frek was enough have brok the hart of any mortall butt my wretched self.¹²⁵

Her husband, son and cousin; these were all figures who legally stood in her stead, or she saw as bearing the responsibility of providing for her.¹²⁶ Through her accusations of 'unkindness' and 'undutifulness' it appears that she considered them to have failed in their roles.

Despite this bitterness and resentment Freke also records that in August 1712, once her son had re-established contact between them, he and his family were en route to Bilney and 'were stormed all thatt day and night in a most dreadfull hurrycane of weather', but 'by my Gods greatt mercy to them and me (affter my being almost frightened outt of my witts), they all landed safe att Bristol'.¹²⁷ In the same year as writing accounts of his unkindness, of his cheating her out of money and his

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 50-1, 222, 15-16.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹²⁶ The term 'friends' could refer to kin and relations. See Tadmor, *Family*, 28.

¹²⁷ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 195-96.

‘undutifulness’, she continued to observe how providence – *her* God – was preserving Ralph from harm. Her simultaneous care for him and her pain at his neglect again epitomises the ambivalence that seeped throughout her writings. Notably, her providentialism was underwriting that ambivalence, but in delivering Ralph to her safely, it was also reinforcing it.

Freke’s mixed feelings towards her relationships and the ambivalence provoked by her providentialism is most visible in her account of an event in 1705. This was after Percy had returned from Ireland to live with her at Bilney. In 1699 her son while living in Ireland had married Elizabeth Meade, daughter of a prominent Irish lawyer and future baronet. Freke would not meet her daughter until the autumn of 1704 when she, Ralph, and two of their children came over to England. Freke became especially attached to her three-year-old grandson John (Jack) during this visit.¹²⁸ Tragically, while in London in the spring of 1705 Jack died from an accidental pistol wound. The boy was buried at West Bilney after a large funeral paid for by Elizabeth.¹²⁹ The impact upon his grandparents was, by Freke’s account, terrible and far-reaching.

In the white text, Freke’s account of these events stretches through seven entries, though some appear to have been written together. She describes Jack as ‘my dearest grandchild I had soe offten beged for, being like my own deer son’, and ‘the loveliest child was ever seen by mee’.¹³⁰ In the second entry she begins to apportion blame, not on the servant ‘Perryman’ who carelessly left the pistols charged but on her daughter, for ‘[Jack] would nott have taken root and branch from me had itt bin left by my cruell <deleted: daughter>. Butt God forgive them <originally: her>’. Freke’s resentment

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹²⁹ On grief, mourning, and the irreplaceability of lost loved ones, see Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), ch. 8.

¹³⁰ Anselment, *Remembrances*, 81.

and grief continues, ‘oh, my harde fatte; I am ruined and undone for my child, and I doubt shall never enjoy my self againe. E Freke’.¹³¹ She continues to describe her daughter as ‘cruel’, though this was later deleted. Ralph and his family then returned to London without their grandparents’ blessing ‘for which with all her other inhumanities to me I begg God to forgive her, butt I will never see her more’.¹³²

The last entry in this tragic episode is revealing about Freke’s providentialism. After an entry for July, she inserts a ‘memorandum’ for the previous May:

I forgott thatt May the seventh to enter heer Gods greatt mercy to me, which was my sons cook man Mr Peryman, ... took one of my sons pockett pistolls charged with a brace of bullets which went off in his hand amongst a room full of people who came to take their leaves of his master and Mr Frek. ... Itt gras’d on one of ther ears, the iron scowring rod like to kill his, my sons, groom. The room was full of smoak, and the bullets rebound all aboutt and hurtt noe body. My God gave them this signall warning before they weere charged to shout my deerst grandchild Mr John Freke, whose hard fate I shall ever lamentt and his death, and, I hope, [be] thankfull to God for the first – above – deliverance. Eliz Freke.¹³³

This excerpt demonstrates the complex ambivalence that Freke’s providentialism could engender. Faced with the perplexity as to why this accident happened and what it signified, Freke has exercised her belief, has observed events, accounted them, so as to not forget them. She identifies this occurrence as a ‘signall warning’ not to herself but to those who should in her eyes have been responsible. In other words, she reinforces the blame she has placed on her daughter-in-law and son because they received God’s warning, but where they ignored it to their son’s peril she thanks God for his mercy in sending it. Faced with the opaqueness of providential explanation, Freke landed on this sign.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 83.

Freke's account in the brown text, written over six years later, extends the calamitous reach of these events. In the four entries describing how her 'deer grandchild was murdered' Freke's narrative has been reshaped considerably. In it we see how providence could simultaneously vindicate and afflict her. For example, the memorandum of the 'signal warning' at Bilney instead becomes her warning, for she 'beged my son and his wife hee [Perryman] mightt be turned away, alleaging here was like to have the same accidentt thatt day hee left my house'.¹³⁴ In these entries Freke still lays blame at the feet of her son and daughter, but it has taken on a different character:

Aboutt 5 a clock in the morning he [her grandson] gave up his soule to God for there undutifullness to mee, for elce my God would nott have taken from me roott and branch as hee did butt to show his judgments to them. Butt God forgive them both theire barbarity to the best of fathers and the indullgents of mothers. Eliz Frek¹³⁵

It appears that Freke's discernment of providence in these events now follows the logic that providence caused the death of her grandson to serve as a judgement upon her son and daughter for their mistreatment of her. In doing so, providence avenged her cause and took her side, but also dispensed affliction upon her. She continues in her assignation of responsibility and judgement, arguing that not only did providence ensure that Jack Freke 'pa[[id] for all theire undutifullness and cruellty to me' but that the shot that killed him was 'the most fattall'st thing thatt ever hapned to me, for this same shott kild my deer husband'.¹³⁶ She writes that the grief felt by Percy after this tragedy exacerbated his illnesses and ultimately caused his death the following year.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹³⁷ See also Anselment's analysis of these events, though he does not discuss providence, *Ibid.*, 27.

Providence had therefore shown Freke mercy through providing her with a beautiful grandson who looked like the son who had hurt and deserted her, but that mercy appeared contradicted by providence stealing away this new object of her affections. The bereavement of her grandson was a further mercy because it was the punishment of her undutiful son and his wife, but again this mercy was embittered by the loss of her husband: a deeply-felt affliction. All in all, this event, the death of Jack Freke, was remembered by Freke in a litany of miseries. But it provides telling insight into her subjective experience of providentialism because it reveals how conflicting interpretations could be made of a single event, and how the exercise of that providentialism both reinforced and provoked a profound and destabilizing state of ambivalence.

3.3. Conclusion

The title of this chapter contains a phrase ‘my God saved my life to know more misery’. Freke wrote this in her second collection of remembrances at the age of seventy, looking back upon experiences twenty years-past.¹³⁸ The phrase is significant because it gets to the heart of Elizabeth Freke’s providentialism; her God saved her through his mercy, but she laboured under that mercy because it brought further miseries. It therefore epitomises the contradiction she perceived and the mixed feelings which her providentialism caused.

The medium through which this providentialism has been accessed in this chapter has been significant. These texts were an act of memory, of choosing, cutting and re-

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

living, through which Freke created a written, re-written and writing self. Because providence featured so strongly in that act it therefore featured in the self that emerged, meaning that her exercise of providentialism contributed to the construction of her sense of self.

This chapter has therefore demonstrated, first, that personal providentialism was practiced into the eighteenth century by an educated, conformist gentlewoman who had grown up amidst the interpretative excesses of the mid-seventeenth century. Second, it has shown that the mystery of providence ensured that providential interpretation was a thoroughly elastic and malleable process. The case of Elizabeth Freke shows how the effect of that elasticity could be contradictory interpretation, and a consequent state of ambivalence which was possible for any providentialist. Finally, it has shown how providentialism, exercised through the creative act of memory in self-writing, created a symbiotic relationship with the subject's perception of themselves. Overall, it has advanced the argument made in this thesis because it encourages us to recognise that providentialism was by its nature subjective and that this exercise of providentialism allowed individuals to adapt, bend and mould it to their needs.

The next chapter presents a case study quite different to Freke. It focusses on a spiritual diarist whose writing illustrates the continuities in the exercise of providentialism. In contrast to Freke, he pursued clear providential meanings behind every event and scrutinised himself to such an extent that he anticipated the providences he would receive. More than anything his providentialism was the search for affections felt by a heart receptive to God's providential care. The next chapter will therefore continue illustrating the subjective nature of providentialism, and how individual writers adapted providence to make sense of the world and their place in it.

4. In Search of Feeling: Providence, Anticipation and Affection in the Diary of Robert Meeke

His mercies have been great, punishments few and easie, ... My heart in the thinking of these things was affected a little. Lord, grant me holy affections sutable to thy love and compassion.

24 November 1703, Diary of Robert Meeke ¹

This chapter is about a seemingly unexceptional diarist called Robert Meeke (1656-1724). In some ways this poor northern curate lived up to his name, leading a steady, relatively quiet and dedicated life in a tight-knit community in West Yorkshire. He recorded this life with diligence and attention in a spiritual diary. This chapter will use that diary to illustrate elements of continuity in the experience and expression of providentialism from the mid-seventeenth to the early eighteenth century.

More specifically, it will argue why Meeke's diary should be seen as a spiritual diary, that in it we can see the exercise of personal providentialism and that such an exercise contributed to his 'state of becoming'.² It will also be argued that Meeke's alertness to sin and punishment rendered in him a state of anticipation – anticipation of both corrective afflictions and the affections that would accompany them. This is an example of providentialism engendering feeling in the individual. Furthermore, it

¹ W. Yorks. AS, Kirklees, KX367, 'Clergyman Robert Meeke, Slaithwaite, Transcript of Diary', 517, 32. [hereafter KX367]

² Tom Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality', *HJ*, 39, 1 (1996), 55.

will be argued that Meeke's subjective experience of providentialism can be characterised as a search for feeling, because in observing, accounting, remembering, *and* anticipating providences, he also sought to feel the warming presence of God in his life. These findings advance the arguments made in this thesis, that personal providentialism continued to play an important role in English lives, that this providentialism was exercised through self-writing, and that such exercise informed both feeling and selfhood. It will also help us to recognise how providentialism was by its nature subjective, and how this subjectivity ensured its usefulness for individuals throughout this period of transition.

The chapter begins with section 4.1., an exploration of Meeke's social and religious background, and an examination of the text, its composition, and correlation with the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping. Section 4.2. characterises Meeke's providentialism, focussing particularly on his experience of affliction and the state of anticipation rendered by his exercise of the belief, and how we can see him in a 'state of becoming'. Section 4.3. explains how Meeke sought feeling in order to obtain a 'holy and clean heart', through which he could find God's warming presence. It will show that his providentialism was crucial in that 'cultivation of affection' and thus illustrates a fundamental characteristic of his subjective experience of providentialism.³ Section 4.4. concludes the chapter and provides the direction taken in chapter 5.

³ KX367, 7; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 17-27.

4.1. Robert Meeke (1656-1724)

Robert Meeke was born in December 1656 in Salford near Manchester, where his father William served as a Presbyterian minister. William came from Skipsea in the East Riding of Yorkshire, had graduated from St Andrews, and proceeded to join the group of notable divines in the Manchester classis formed in 1646.⁴ Meeke would never hear this history from his father, however, for William died when Robert was just over a year old. From his diary we know that Robert sought to learn about his father's life and character, reading his diaries and letters and visiting Skipsea to 'see the Tenant who liveth where my father was born'.⁵ Afterwards, Meeke reflected that the house was 'much out of repaire' and on seeing the meanness of his father's study 'I thank god I have one much more convenient, and pleasant'.⁶ His heightened expectations of comfort no doubt extended from his mother's provision of wealth. In the same entry, he reflects that 'my father was born in a very mean house' but 'my mother in a comely hall ... I am a branch of yeomanry by the father, of gentility by my mother'. His mother Catherine Hyde of Hyde Hall (d.1693) would have claimed higher social status than his father, but they had met through her father – an active lay member in the Manchester classis – and married in 1654. After William died in January 1658 she married Ralph Arden, a younger son of Harden Hall, and had several more children. Meeke thus grew up in a big family, well-connected in Presbyterian circles.⁷

⁴ For a sense of Meeke's father's religiosity see his publication, William Meeke, *The Faithfull Scout: Giving an Alarme to Yorkshire* (1646). See also Henry James Morehouse (ed.), *Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Robert Meeke* (London, 1874), vii-viii; Margaret Freeman, 'Robert Meeke, Curate at Slaithwaite 1684-1724: A New Look at the Diarist and his Background', in Jennifer Stead (ed.), 'A Collection of Original Articles', *Local History Publications: Old West Riding, New Series*, 15 (1995), in KX367, 3-4.

⁵ KX367, 190-1.

⁶ KX367, 127.

⁷ Freeman, 'Robert Meeke', 4-5; Morehouse, *Extracts*, x-xii.

After the Restoration the family continued their acquaintance with their Presbyterian friends and Meeke was educated at Frankland Academy, a dissenting academy established by Yorkshireman and Presbyterian minister Richard Frankland (1630-98). This was the school where well-known nonconformist Oliver Heywood sent his sons, where they would be taught ‘logic, metaphysics, somatology, pneumatology, natural philosophy, divinity and chronology’.⁸ Meeke then followed the path of many young nonconformists on to a Scottish university, graduating MA from Edinburgh University in 1680. Whether or not he (and his family) had conformed at this point is unclear. His brother William certainly had, and was ordained and licensed as curate of a small chapelry in Slaithwaite in the parish of Huddersfield. William’s time there was short, however; he died in 1684 and left a widow, Mary, and a son, Billy. Meeke then followed in his brother’s steps. He was ordained deacon at York in December 1684 and in the same month, aged 28, was licensed to the curacy which his brother had sadly vacated. He remained curate in Slaithwaite until his death in 1724.⁹

Slaithwaite was a small village set into ‘one of those valleys which intersect the high mountain range dividing Yorkshire from Lancashire’ on the River Colne. It was far removed from the more populated and wealthier agrarian regions of West Yorkshire, sitting on the south-west edge of the coal measures on the less fertile millstone grit. Though the region experienced a ‘gradual but marked geographical

⁸ S. Handley, ‘Frankland, Richard, (1630-1698)’, *ODNB*, (published online 23 September 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10085?rskey=B8ePZY&result=1> (accessed 10th January 2018); W. J. Sheils, ‘Heywood, Oliver, (bap. 1630, d. 1702)’, *ODNB*, (published online 23 September 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13186?rskey=95Fhgl&result=1> (accessed 8 January 2018).

⁹ Freeman, ‘Robert Meeke’, 4-5; Morehouse, *Extracts*, xii. See also ‘Person: Meeke, Robert (1684-1684) CCEd Person ID 117697’, Clergy of the Church of England Database, <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/persons/CreatePersonFrames.jsp?PersonID=117697> (accessed 7th January 2018).

redistribution of population and wealth', particularly in Huddersfield to the north-west of the village, this would not have a significant impact upon Slaithwaite until after Meeke's time.¹⁰ In the surrounding area, however, the growth of the textile industry was well under way and though removed and small the village was not an isolated place to reside; Meeke wrote about travelling frequently and extensively in the north of England.

When Meeke arrived in Slaithwaite in 1684 he first lodged with a 'widow Bottomley' at Waterside, the same hostess who had welcomed Oliver Heywood after his ejection from the parish of Coley in 1668. Meeke then moved to Hill Top and lodged with his late brother's sister-in-law and her husband Aeneas Bothomley, a wool-stapler, who he refers to as 'cousins'.¹¹ He remained there all his life and developed a close relationship with the Bothomleys, particularly the son Edmund Bothomley who served as the executor of his will.¹² Meeke never married, only commenting in 1689 that 'as yet I am unresolved to marry'.¹³ He did leave a legacy in Slaithwaite though, having established a free school in the village in 1721. In his will he bequeathed a parcel of land to sustain the schoolmaster, bibles and prayer books and warm clothing for the poor of the community, and the majority of his library to his successor.¹⁴

Slaithwaite's chapel was on the edge of the township and served neighbouring villages such as Golcar, and was convenient for inhabitants of Lingards and Linthwaite. It had been recommended that Slaithwaite be made into a parish during

¹⁰ On changes in wealth and population distribution in the West Riding see, R. C. N. Thornes, *West Yorkshire: "A Noble Scene of Industry" The Development of the County 1500 to 1830* (Wakefield, 1981), 2-11. See also Morehouse, *Extracts*, xiii.

¹¹ Morehouse, *Extracts*, xii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xx.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xix

the Interregnum though this came to nothing during the Restoration and it continued to fall under the parish jurisdiction of Huddersfield St Peter. Meeke would also have been answerable to the vicar of nearby Almondbury. The curacy of Slaithwaite chapel was not a lucrative position for him, the provision for a minister being just 4s. per annum. The inhabitants of the chapelry paid at a rate of 1s. 6d. for each sitting, amounting to around £20 per annum if he could obtain such payment.¹⁵ From the diary it seems that obtaining his wage was a challenge, for example in January 1691 he pursued one of his congregation who was ‘a great deal behind in chappel-wage’ but ‘instead of either promise or payment I gott some hard words’.¹⁶ He also implies that the wage was a burden for many, especially in times when, as in 1691, ‘money is very scant, Tradeing bad, [and] poor pple have little for their work’.¹⁷ The diary indicates other sources of income for Meeke, in legacies and rents, though none of these were substantial amounts. Grant Tapsell described Meeke as ‘an extremely poor minister’, but as Henry Morehouse, the diary’s editor, observes being ‘unmarried, and of simple habits’ he could continue in the position despite his struggles, striving for whatever pastoral success he could attain.¹⁸

Within a few years Meeke seems to have impressed the locale enough to be invited to a better position at Penistone in 1690. He refused the position and agreed only to preach, citing that he was ‘at the present wel settled’.¹⁹ Slaithwaite chapelry had been loyal to the curate who had refused to conform during the Restoration, and was happy to invite Presbyterian ministers to preach.²⁰ Meeke was therefore a good match for this

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁶ KX367, 54-5.

¹⁷ KX367, 58.

¹⁸ KX367, 199, 201; Grant Tapsell, ‘Pastors, Preachers and Politicians: The Clergy of the Later Stuart Church’, in Grant Tapsell (ed.), *The Later Stuart Church, 1660-1714* (Manchester, 2012; 2017), 71-100, quoted at 75; Morehouse, *Extracts*, xiv-xv.

¹⁹ KX367, 28.

²⁰ Freeman, ‘Robert Meeke’, 5-6.

tight-knit community, having a nonconformist background and connections and a sympathy for dissenters which is noted in the diary.²¹ For example, after reading Richard Baxter's *The English Nonconformity* (1689), he wrote 'it is sad to read, to consider of the divisions which are amongst us. ... tho' I can submit to many things which others cannot, yet I would not have able and worthy men to be cast out of the church, because they cannot'.²² He recorded visits from old nonconformist acquaintances and from those attending meetings nearby.²³ When a Mr Copley preached a 'sharp sermon against dissenters' in the chapel he wrote 'For my part, if I must speak my own judgment, I think such sermons doe more hurt than good'.²⁴

Meeke hoped for an end to the division from those Presbyterians he considered as brethren, and for a united national church.²⁵ His inheritance of Presbyterian stylistic religiosity was reflected in his ministry, in a preference for 'plain method' and language. He considered sermons a critical part of his role and expressed anxiety when he failed to preach effectively or was 'disorderly in delivery, not plain, not distinct'.²⁶ He would not refrain from using wrongdoing in the community as the subject matter for those sermons; if a person had sinned egregiously Meeke would use their example for the edification of his hearers.²⁷

Meeke not only scrutinised the members of his congregation but also how he was perceived by them; he appears sensitive to criticism and gossip and noted troubling

²¹ Though we should take a tempered view of lay enthusiasm for pastoral interference, as argued by Jacob using Meeke as an example, W. M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), 42.

²² Richard Baxter, *The English Nonconformity as Under King Charles II and King James II Truly Stated and Argued by Richard Baxter* (1689; 1690); KX367, 50-1.

²³ KX367, 189; 207.

²⁴ KX367, 471.

²⁵ For more on the Anglican perspective see John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, 'Introduction', in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England, c.1689 – c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), 1-67.

²⁶ KX367, 242-3, 227.

²⁷ Such as a suicide in the village in 1692, KX367, 132-3.

reports in the diary. For example, he writes of hearing ‘one whispering to another concerning my selfe and saying of me those things which ... I can say truly ... I am not guilty of’.²⁸ In September 1689 he writes with evident concern that he ‘heard this morning that a great scandal is cast upon me, many talk of it. I do protest I am innocent, and nothing deserving such a report’.²⁹ This may have been regarding a Mrs Susan Dyson, ‘one who many thought I would have applied myself unto, but they were mistaken’.³⁰ Or it may have been about a servant from ‘where I was formerly tabled’, of whom it was ‘reported by some that there was love concerns betwixt us’.³¹ He wrote further worries about there being ‘an Admonicion out against me’ and about being called a ‘Liar’, worries that demonstrate how closely Meeke watched his reputation and how he considered ‘a good name, especially desired ... [to be] better than precious ointment’.³²

As these excerpts might suggest, Meeke was a man who watched himself and others closely. He was sociable and reports visiting many friends and family, noting that ‘I love societie well but it takes me from business’.³³ However, he also appears to have also been deeply self-conscious. We can observe this in accounts of his performance in sermons, such as July 1691 when his relations Sir John Arderne and his Lady attended and he laments that ‘when I would appear better than ordinary, haveing great persons to be my hearers, oftentimes I am worse, more stammering in utterance and more confused in matter both in prayer and preaching’.³⁴ Rather than forgiving himself for a common case of nervousness, Meeke ties this stumbling over

²⁸ KX367, 214.

²⁹ Morehouse, *Extracts*, 8-9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

³¹ KX367, 237-8.

³² KX367, 214.

³³ KX367, 557.

³⁴ KX367, 80-1.

words to character traits he disliked. In June 1694 he writes about reading one of his father's old letters and notes down William's self-portrait:

I am naturally of a foolishly bashfull disposition, which maketh me close and secret in all my cariage many times to my own disadvantage, and is as a seal to my lipps that I cannot speak my mind: I am also of a fearfull temper, even to a sinfull distrust, an apprehension of danger sticks close to my spirit, and maketh me slow in my actings towards that which carryeth in it the occasion of my fears; and that's the reason why I have been so slow to chang my condicon, and in matter thereunto belonging.³⁵

Meeke writes that 'I am his express image in this character', that 'I experience in my selfe the properties; foolish bashfulness, and distrustfull fear'. He attributes his stammering and nervousness to traits that he then pleads God to remove; 'lord when thou seest good thou canst change these qualities'.³⁶ Regardless as to whether this is an accurate representation of his character the degree of self-consciousness apparent in the diary suggests that Meeke was naturally introspective, sensitive to the point of touchiness, yet generally steady and diligent, schooled and shaped by godly principles.

The impression of Meeke's self-consciousness is enhanced by his diary. We meet him in his own world of self-examination and careful reflection and so it is no wonder that he appears a pensive and introspective character. To better understand this world, this section, having explored Meeke's background and social context, will now turn attention onto his diary, to its composition, content, the audience it was written for, how Meeke used it, and how it correlates with the predominant type of seventeenth-century first person account: the spiritual diary. It will be argued that Meeke's personal account was indeed a spiritual diary, and in it we can see an act of memory which was the constant formation and re-formation of resolution and self; Meeke appears to be in

³⁵ KX367, 190-1.

³⁶ KX367, 190-1.

a constant state of anticipation, of 'becoming'.³⁷ This argument is significant in the overall context of the thesis because it is maintained that individuals were enacting their providential belief through self-writing and that such exercise informed how they perceived themselves. It thus serves as a reminder of the subjective nature of providentialism.

The existing diaries of Robert Meeke cover the periods May 1689 to August 1694, and May 1700 to June 1704. Both are held by the West Yorkshire Archive Service.³⁸ Extracts of the earlier volume were published by Henry Morehouse in 1874, with the assistance of the then Vicar of Almondbury and Slaithwaite Charles Hulbert who rebuilt Meeke's free school. In 1874 the location of the other volumes was unknown, but the 1700-04 volume was discovered in 1933 – being in private hands – then rediscovered by local historians Mary and Margaret Freeman in the late twentieth century, after which the diary was donated to the archive service. This small, slim volume reveals very small and regular handwriting within ruled margins and with headings for month and year. It appears to be a well-organised, tidy personal account. The Freemans transcribed both volumes of the diary in full and these are available in Kirklees. Because the original manuscripts are in a fragile state, this chapter has made use of their transcript which after some investigation appears to be thorough and accurate.

The content of the diary details the workings of providence in Meeke's life, his sins and prayers. It is an account of his studying, reading, and compiling sermons, his pastoral duties such as visiting the sick or grieving, performing baptisms, marriages

³⁷ Webster, 'Writing', 55.

³⁸ W. Yorks. AS, Wakefield, WPD120, 'Slaithwaite with East Scammonden St James, Parish Records', including the diary of Robert Meeke; Kirklees, WYK1347/1, 'Diary; Original Diary of the Reverend Robert Meeke'.

and funerals, collecting money, or travelling to preach in neighbouring parishes or to visit family. It is also a record of his health, though he does not go into detail about his personal life beyond noting visits and important conversations. He consistently records the weather and progress of cultivation in the area, and notes his concerns during the haymaking and harvesting seasons. The entries tend towards brevity rather than length, unless there was something of real concern to write about, such as an accident or an unusual report or a particular seizure of conscience.

The diary entries are in daily sequence, some written each day, others the next day or at the end of a week. For example, in this entry from September 1690 Meeke writes one entry into another: '24. I went this forenoon to visit a sick person, whom I also saw yesternight. She lyeth speechless Lord have mercy on her, and fitt her for thy will. (25) – I hear this morning she is dead'.³⁹ The temporality of the document is liable to change with fluctuations in practice. Nonetheless, Meeke accounted most days, even if he wrote them later. He makes several mentions of writing 'last week's diary' and of writing up entries after travelling, such as in June 1701 when he 'wrote over the late journey's diary very imperfectly'.⁴⁰ After his mother's death in May 1693 he had abandoned writing entirely and then lamented that he 'wrote the last fortnights diary in which time I saw two of my relac[i]ons layd in the dust'.⁴¹ Lapses such as these were of serious concern and were to be avoided. In November 1693 he wrote that 'having forgot to note the actions, and occurrences of the beginning of this moneth, untill the tenth day, I cannot remember, where I was, or what I did to day, so frail is my memory about things past'.⁴² In June 1702 after writing the last week's diary he

³⁹ KX367, 44-5.

⁴⁰ KX367, 86, 406, 411, 479, 289.

⁴¹ KX367, 152.

⁴² KX367, 168.

prays for God's help in the following weeke, for 'I am too prone to let days and weeks pass, and to do little, tho' I have much to do both for my selfe and others'.⁴³ Time was therefore important to Meeke, or more specifically, spending time wisely. He likely believed that time was not his to waste because it was God's, and it should therefore be witnessed with care and attention. So while the composition of the document was not necessarily quotidian the diary should be seen as a record of days because Meeke needed each day to be recorded and treasured as a gift.

Meeke also took the care to re-read and study his daily record. He had practical reasons for this, such as recording annual tax income or the conditions of the harvest season, which allowed him to compare years: 'I love to note such things, that I may observe the difference of years, and seasons'.⁴⁴ The majority of Meeke's references to re-reading, however, reflected his attention to the passage of time; the same motivation underlying the composition of his daily record. A year on from his mother's death he writes,

Lord help me to redeem time, that I may know how to give an account; I am affraid many days I can give no account of; much of my time is passed away unprofitably; as some of it the last year about this time is past in silence I mean; not taken notice of in this diary.⁴⁵

His re-reading could be a source of spiritual improvement, of criticism, even of edition. After re-reading in April 1702 Meeke states that 'looking back into this diary ... I found 'fault' left out. I wrote and interlined it'.⁴⁶ He was re-writing and correcting his written record in accordance to the standards of proper accounting as he saw it. In the last entry of the diary he writes 'Lord, pardon all the faults & misspent time which

⁴³ KX367, 406.

⁴⁴ KX367, 204, 227.

⁴⁵ KX367, 187.

⁴⁶ KX367, 468-9.

is in this book’, knowing full-well that he was ‘prone to make mistakes; therefore I should think before I write’.⁴⁷

This audience of one (or two if we count God, which Meeke would have done), means that Meeke was writing for his future self. This qualifies him as one of Wiener and Rosenwald’s diarists who write ‘the backward with the forward gaze’, engaging in an exercise of ‘anticipative memory’.⁴⁸ His daily record was written to service his future self as well as record his past, designed to be serviceable on another occasion. There is also evidence that he wrote with other readers in mind, too. Meeke bequeathed several of his possessions to Edmund Bothomley, including furniture, and ‘all his notes, and his father’s diary and his own, being in several paper books, to be perused if he please, or else to be burnt’.⁴⁹

We know, then, that by the end of his life Meeke intended these diaries to be read. The circulation of diaries in godly communities was not uncommon and he was aware of the practice.⁵⁰ He read his father’s diary in June 1694 alongside his own as a means of spiritual exercise.⁵¹ He also read ‘a little book containing the experiences of one who I believ to be a good man and zealous for good and the ways of godliness’, and noted that ‘the author of the book I read kept a diarie, as I doe, but by his account was much longer and fuller in setting down is own experiences’.⁵² So he was a consumer of written lives as well as a writer. Perhaps this is why he concealed personal information from the reader, hiding the nature of his sins, writing that ‘it Pleased god

⁴⁷ KX367, 557, 566.

⁴⁸ Wendy J. Wiener and G. C. Rosenwald, ‘A Moment’s Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary’, in T. L. Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (Abingdon, 2007), iv, 83-4.

⁴⁹ Morehouse, *Extracts*, xx.

⁵⁰ Andrew Cambers, ‘Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 46, 4 (2007), 800.

⁵¹ KX367, 191.

⁵² KX367, 493-4.

to bring me under some trouble which I must confess, I have brought upon myself', or 'after dinner forgot my duty, gave way to Satan ... ran upon temptacion'.⁵³ Rarely does he elaborate on the nature of his sins in the diary, perhaps because he deemed it unnecessary, but more likely that he found such exposure embarrassing or shameful. The gift of the diary to Bothomley, the consumption of others' written lives, and the concealment of private details of his life, all indicate that this was not a wholly private document.

It was, however, an instrument for introspection and spiritual exercise. Recalling Mascuch's description of Rogers' *Seven Treatises* (1603) discussed in chapter 2, a spiritual diary would contain 'discrete, dated entries', that noted 'worthy things' relating to the writer's spiritual state. It was a means of self-dissection, a 'personal speculum through which he saw the condition of his own heart'.⁵⁴ This was, in Haller's words, the 'Puritan's confessional'.⁵⁵ The traits that identify a spiritual diary can be found in the pages of Meeke's diary: the intense self-examination, the preoccupation with sin and natural corruption, the recording of providences and watchfulness of time. Meeke watched himself, and clearly saw this life in the context of the next.⁵⁶ Indeed, he prays in the diary for God to 'strengthen my memorie', in an attempt to guard against numbness to the passing of time.⁵⁷

The most noticeable trait that confirms this as a spiritual diary is Meeke's sense of his natural corruption, and his fear of falling into sin or succumbing to his faults.

⁵³ KX367, 5, 31.

⁵⁴ G. A. Starr, *Defoe & Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ, 1965), 6; Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Stanford, CA, 1996), 77-81.

⁵⁵ William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1957), 38.

⁵⁶ Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly (eds.), *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation 1550-1660* (Aldershot, 2007), 18, 34.

⁵⁷ KX367, 160.

He recalls studying one morning in 1689, when he was ‘composeing and gathering’ arguments for original sin. ‘But Lord I need no arguments’, he writes, as ‘my own experience is sufficient; my natural corruption is strong’, that ‘even now [I] sinned against thee’. He prays to be ‘wearie with sin’, to resist it as the ‘first inclination’.⁵⁸ This kind of reflection is a constant: ‘sin overcame me’, ‘began this day with vanity’, ‘was suddenly overtaken by my great enemie mine iniquity lord have mercy upon me’.⁵⁹ The diary is a receptacle of his sins and with each entry Meeke used this instrument to reflect and then to rewrite himself, to re-form and renew resolutions. Each entry was as much an act of anticipation as it was of memory.

Tom Webster has suggested that in their spiritual diaries and in the regular and cyclical exercise of ‘ceaseless introspection’ we can see diarists in a ‘state of becoming’, in a ‘continual, daily self-making’.⁶⁰ Their ‘lack of closure’ was a ‘condition for the truly godly life’, something which is reflected in their daily purgation of sin. Webster’s reflections are relevant to Meeke’s diary. While not all of the diary entries can be characterised as the outpourings of a transgressive heart, many can. It is a spiritual diary, displaying the quotidian shaping of a written self that Webster describes. We cannot know whether Meeke persisted in this ‘state of becoming’ throughout his life because we only have those diaries written between the ages of 32 and 37, and 43 and 47. But in the diaries we can see Meeke renewing his prayers and resolutions, repeatedly praying for assurance and forgiveness, and searching for affection, that sign of vitality and closeness to God. He does appear to be in a state of becoming. His exercise of providentialism was crucial to that state of

⁵⁸ KX367, 9.

⁵⁹ KX367, 76, 175, 182-3.

⁶⁰ Webster, ‘Writing’, 55.

becoming because it involved and provoked a state of anticipation – an anticipation of providences and a search for feeling and affection.

Meeke was a self-conscious, diligent individual who examined himself and others very closely, and who recorded those examinations in a diary. Influenced by his Presbyterian education and his father's diary-keeping, this was a diarist operating in the tradition of autobiographical writing established by early seventeenth-century puritan writers. Meeke's diary demonstrates the continuing adoption of that practice in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and serves in this thesis as a reference point for the elements of continuity in the experience of providentialism.

Furthermore, this section has demonstrated that his practice of keeping a spiritual diary, a sequential, daily record of his sins, prayers, and providences, was an ongoing shaping and re-shaping of self, a state of becoming and anticipation. What this shows is that Meeke's diary was a site where he could enact his providentialism in accordance to the traditions established throughout the seventeenth century. Indeed, it was a fundamental part of why he kept the diary in the first place, meaning that it was integral to the written and remembered self constructed there. It therefore shows that providentialism was informing perceptions of self, and that the subjective exercise of the belief ensured its durability during this period.

4.2. Meeke's Providentialism

In this section, it will be argued that Meeke's diary demonstrates the threads of continuity in the experience of providentialism in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It will be seen that Meeke's providentialism, enacted through his self-writing, was expressed through recognisable language, that it was concerned with

the duality of mercy and judgement, and that it reflected a preoccupation with the afflictions he would receive for his sins. It will be shown that this preoccupation is consistent with the practice, common in spiritual diaries, of suffering through adversity as a means of reaching assurance. Furthermore, the section will conclude by showing how Meeke's awareness of his sins made him anticipate the corrective providences he would receive. The exercise of providentialism in his diary therefore contributed to his 'state of becoming'.⁶¹

Many of Meeke's invocations of providence are expressed in language that is typical of diaries of the seventeenth century, as discussed in chapter 2. They bear resemblance to invocations made in all of the diaries examined in this study. They are repetitive, recognisable, and occur in predictable circumstances. For example, the phrase 'blessed be god' is one of Meeke's most-used providential phrases, and served as a nod, an acknowledgement to providence made with habitual regularity.⁶² After journeying home through the dark across Crosland Moor with his landlady in November 1693, he describes losing his way in a thick mist, whereupon the lady 'was much dejected and out of hopes', 'but blessed be god for his guideing providence', which steered him off the moor to a place he knew. He thanked God 'for hearing my request when I was wandring' and for this 'preserving guideing providence'.⁶³ This account is not dissimilar to Elizabeth Freke's accounts of travelling to and from Ireland, or, as we shall see, from Samuel Jeake's thanks to providence for preserving the ships carrying his goods. It is indicative of belief in the workings of God in individuals' lives, and the shared language of personal providentialism that endured in this period.

⁶¹ Webster, 'Writing', 55.

⁶² For example, 'arose in health blessed by God', KX367, 25.

⁶³ KX367, 168-9.

Like those other diaries studied in this thesis, Meeke also observed providences in public events and in others' lives. Just as Freke had pointed out the mercies her son had received – to a cold reception – so too did Meeke observe that when a Mr Walton was 'drawn severall yards with his foot in the stirrup by a made horse, and yet was not hurt', it was 'a mercifull providence. Lord, sanctifie such to him and me'.⁶⁴ Similarly, when a miller was taken ill suddenly and died, it was thought that 'extream greife and trouble' had killed him, caused by the death of a horse for which he owed money. Meeke seems unsure of the natural cause, but reflects that 'whatever the occasion of his death it was sudden; Lord let them take warning by such providences'.⁶⁵ He was also watchful of the fortunes of his congregation, ensuring he thanked God on their behalf 'for thy mercies to us', for plentiful harvests, good trade and affordable commodities that allowed the poor to 'have sufficient'.⁶⁶ His participation in the fortunes of his fellow villagers is also expressed in an account of his landlady delivering a child. She was delivered, he writes, 'just att that time when I was at private prayers and had put up some petitions in particular for her'. He then declares that 'I take notice of this as providentiall; but I dare not presume to ascribe the present mercy to my prayers, but wholly to god's good pleasure'.⁶⁷ There was not much in his life, it seems, that he did not see in a providential light.

Meeke's exercise of providentialism is quite visible, as one would expect of a spiritual diary. He took pains to acknowledge both mercies and judgements, suggesting an alertness to the relationship between his own behaviour, the changes in his environment, and the potential retribution providence could dispense. His response

⁶⁴ KX367, 206.

⁶⁵ KX367, 123.

⁶⁶ KX367, 291.

⁶⁷ KX367, 414.

was to observe, account and remember those events in which he discerned the work of providence. For example, in this September 1702 account we can see his acknowledgement of the duality of providence, and how his exercise of providentialism corresponded to it:

I purposed to have gone to Huddersfield but rain prevented. It was a very great wind last night, and to day very wett. Lord, shew favour in the present season. The fields are full of corn; there is a great increase if the lord be pleased to grant good season to reap and gather. God's good providences about me when correcting are very easie, and his favourable providences many more and seasonable. I desire to observe and improve both kinds: lord, give wisdom and grace so to doe.⁶⁸

This is hardly a dramatic portrait of mercies and judgements at work, but it shows Meeke's discernment of the divine hand behind everyday events and at work in his environment. The ill weather was a frowning providence, a minor correction, whereas the abundance of corn was a smiling providence, a mercy. Meeke states his intention to observe these providences and by accounting them in his diary he thereby remembered and set up a monument to them, thus facilitating his improvement of them. His failure to do so, however, would need to be corrected, as in April 1701 when he 'forgot to observe a providentiall favour I received last Saturday'; he had planned on travelling but was unable to find a horse in two places, 'but there was one ... come into another man's field' which he borrowed at first without leave, but providentially encountered its owner who 'gave me free leave. I bless god for his mercies'.⁶⁹ Just as Meeke took care to record each day in his diary so too was he careful to observe every providence, every mercy and judgement, which highlights the alignment of self-writing and his exercise of providentialism.

⁶⁸ KX367, 427-8.

⁶⁹ KX367, 278.

Meeke's alertness to the duality of providence is one of the most notable features of his providentialism. As will become clear in chapter 5, this is not a universal trait of diarists exercising personal providentialism; Samuel Jeake observed only smiling providences and judgement is conspicuously absent from his diary. In contrast, Meeke does not hesitate to observe how God 'mixeth mercyes with frowns, & tokens of displeasure', that 'gods wise providences [are] mixed; and changeable', that 'the providences god is pleased to exercise about his pple, intermixing sadness with mirth'.⁷⁰ Such observations chime with the ambivalence towards providence experienced by Freke, ambivalence about the contradictory signals sent by God in his dispensations. Meeke recorded both smiling and frowning providences, even simultaneously, but presents less ambivalence about mixed providences than was seen in the last chapter, reflecting that we 'have afflictions as well as consolacons'.⁷¹

Meeke also seems to have embraced all providences, conflicting or not. He searched for them exhaustively and anticipated mercies and judgements, and the consolation and affliction that would accompany them. For example, when studying at home in June 1690 he writes that 'I have both mercies and afflictions to consider, and take notice of, and yet neither of these will prevaile; o Lord humble me, but remember mercy Amen. let not my confessions come in judgment against me'.⁷² This entry is about the providences Meeke had already received and discerned, and about those which he could expect, hope for, or dread. This entry begins to communicate the mode of feeling wrought by Meeke's providentialism: a state of anticipation wherein signs of God's hand were actively sought and expected with fear and hope. Because he observed, accounted and remembered these providences in daily entries in his diary,

⁷⁰ KX 367, 112, 152, 455.

⁷¹ KX367, 165.

⁷² KX367, 37.

each entry was an occasion to anticipate and accept providence, to look forward as well as to look back. His providentialism was therefore about becoming, about anticipation.

Meeke mostly anticipated afflictions. He would rarely be so presumptuous as to anticipate mercies, for that way led to pride, sin and a false sense of security. Personal afflictions could take many forms, but included sickness and death, poor fortune in business, and accidents.⁷³ Richard Rogers in his *Seven Treatises* described them as ‘Troubles’, meaning not only ‘great & vnwonted losses, long sicknesses, persecutions, and such like: but those also which fall out verie oft and commonly, as vnkindnesse and discourtesie in neighbours; vnthriftinesse, vnrulinesse and disobedience in children; vnfaithfulnesse and negligence in seruants; discommodities and harmes in family matters; with such like’.⁷⁴ Troubles were ‘sent by God as a correction for sin, for the good of the sinner’ and should be accepted as ‘a just punishment’ born with patience. By examining oneself for the sin that had caused it, by ‘improving’ on it, one sought to have the affliction ‘sanctified’ and thereby removed.⁷⁵

Afflictions were not wholly negative experiences, however. It would be far worse to be left alone by God, untested.⁷⁶ As Thomas reflects ‘some suffering was almost ... proof that God retained an interest in the person concerned’.⁷⁷ If a diarist such as Meeke was suffering then he was avoiding the perilous state of ‘security’, the ‘ill-

⁷³ David Harley, ‘The Theology of Affliction and the Experience of Sickness in the Godly Family, 1650-1714: The Henrys and the Newcomes’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 276.

⁷⁴ Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises* (1603), quoted in Ann Thompson, *The Art of Suffering and the Impact of Seventeenth-Century Anti-Providential Thought* (Aldershot, 2003), 1.

⁷⁵ Harley, ‘Theology of Affliction’, 277-8.

⁷⁶ Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD, 1996), 17.

⁷⁷ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971; 1991), 95.

grounded conviction’, the ‘too easy spiritual self-confidence’ that you were one of the elect.⁷⁸ ‘Security’ was the inverse of the state all spiritual diarists sought: assurance.⁷⁹ To anticipate and study afflictions was therefore to practice the ‘art of suffering’, an exercise that prevented security and that allowed one, through adversity, to find assurance: ‘it played a key part in the quest to second-guess whether one had been preselected for a happy afterlife or cast aside’.⁸⁰ Thus, while afflictions were painful and not expected to be enjoyed, they were at least evidence that God cared enough to unleash his ‘rods’ of chastisement upon you with the intention of correcting you to bring you into his grace.⁸¹

Meeke seems to have subscribed to this belief that afflictions were a sign of God’s countenance upon him, to be looked for and anticipated, accepted and improved upon. To understand what afflictions looked like to Meeke, we can draw two examples from the diary. One is a collective judgment that occurred in January 1701, in the form of ‘the greatest flood that hath been these severall years’, where ‘a great snow being followed with a great rain’ destroyed the ‘Lower dam, Lee dam and part of the Low West wood dam’. Meeke follows this account by asking ‘Lord, amend us all by such afflicting providences’.⁸² A second example concerns him more directly. In 1704 Meeke was notified of ‘the burning of nephew’s house’, the house where his father and grandfather had been born. To him this fire was a sign of God’s displeasure. His reaction to the news was telling:

⁷⁸ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 23-4.

⁷⁹ For an examination of what the experience of assurance looked like see Kate Narveson, ‘Resting Assured in Puritan Piety: The Lay Experience’, in Alec Ryrie and T. Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke 2016), 166-192.

⁸⁰ Thompson, *Suffering*, 2; Alexandra Walsham, ‘The Happiness of Suffering: Adversity, Providence, and Agency in Early Modern England’, in M. J. Braddick and J. Innes (eds.), *Suffering and Happiness in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016), 45-65, at 54.

⁸¹ Winship, *Seers*, 17.

⁸² KX367, 256.

Lord, teach me the meaning and give me the good fruit of this sad providence. I have severall times beggd the charity of my congregacion to such suffers by fire, but I am afraid not so carefully as I should have done. Now I my selfe experience something of others' suffering. Lord, teach me every way to improve this affliction, and particularly to be humble for my own sins.⁸³

Meeke interpreted the burning of his nephew's house as a correction of his sins, specifically his failings as a minister. Three weeks later he travelled to Skipsea to see 'the house of my father burnt down to the ground'. 'Lord, give a blessing to this affliction', he writes, and 'if there be any speciall cause in my sinfull heart or life ... teach to find out the Action and the accursed thing'.⁸⁴ A further two weeks later Meeke was still contemplating the fire: 'in my inward thoughts god's judgements upon the house of my fathers came into my mind ... I do beleev my sins are the cause'.⁸⁵ Meeke ensured that this affliction did not go unnoticed. He observed, accounted and remembered it, and sought to improve it to have it sanctified. He makes it clear that his sins had been the cause, and therefore seeks to be corrected and for God to 'turn away his anger and grant me his fatherly care for future'.⁸⁶

Meeke's record of these afflictions demonstrates the correlation in his mind between sin and punishment. He makes this correlation much clearer than Freke, whose exercise of providentialism was littered with contradiction. Meeke, on the other hand, actively sought to identify afflictions and used his 'daily self-making' to refine his capacity for self-examination. He searched for clarity. The result and cost of his continual introspection was that when he found sin he anticipated judgement.

For example, in April 1693 'immediately after dinner' Meeke writes that he 'comitted a wilfull and deliberate sin'. He prays that 'lord grant me repentance, and

⁸³ KX367, 551.

⁸⁴ KX367, 558.

⁸⁵ KX367, 562.

⁸⁶ KX367, 562.

remission; while mercy is tendered, & before wrath and judgment be executed'.⁸⁷ The exercise of providentialism here goes beyond observing, accounting and remembering providences. Meeke anticipates – in some agitation – the correction that would likely come his way. In another instance, he writes of 'bringing a dull frame of heart, a wandring, vain mind and cold affections into the presence of god'. To Meeke this was of serious concern because, as explained below, warm affections and a soft heart were the route to vitality and closeness to God. He follows this confession by writing that God 'may deservedly retaliate me with disturbances and outward incumbrances'.⁸⁸ He anticipates divine retribution, a retaliation from the deity due to the provocation of his sins. In March 1690 he writes that he had 'sinned greatly', that he made promises and vows only to break them, made resolutions to see them crumble, and so he then asks, 'what can I expect but wrath'?⁸⁹ Two years later in 1692 Meeke again reflects that his 'sins increase' and pleads 'o my saviour have mercy on me', 'I am afraid I must tast of the rod, and lye under the tokens of thy displeasure, before I can be brought to forsake my sins'.⁹⁰ Where he found faults he found cause for retribution, resulting in fear. This is important because it illustrates how the self-awareness that his writing engendered and the providentialism he could exercise in these pages meant that he anticipated punishment and the feelings that accompanied it.

Meeke's anticipation of afflictions is significant because it encourages us to think about what his exercise of providentialism amounted to, what it did in his life, how he experienced the belief subjectively. His exercise of this belief may be identifiable through typical expressions and 'nods' to the deity through recognisable phrases, but

⁸⁷ KX367, 148.

⁸⁸ KX367, 302.

⁸⁹ KX367, 29.

⁹⁰ KX367, 105.

these actually point to a vital site of agency and experience that might go unnoticed as ‘mere literary decoration’.⁹¹ His exercise of providentialism initiated a state of anticipation and becoming, of what would be realised. In the space of his sequential diary this was repeated and re-worked. Over time, it shaped how he perceived himself and his actions, and tied his past actions to what his present and future experience would look like. His personal providentialism was therefore playing a fundamental role in how he felt and in how he perceived himself within his world.

In this section, it has been argued that Meeke was exercising personal providentialism in his diary, in accordance to the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping established by puritan writers. Meeke expressed providentialism with the language typically used in seventeenth-century autobiographical texts. He carefully observed, accounted and remembered the providences at work in his own life and in the lives of others. He also made the duality of providence clear in his diary, placing a pronounced and explicit emphasis on God’s afflictions, something which again identifies this diary as operating in the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping. Looking past the typicality of the diary, however, it is possible to see that through the practice of self-writing Meeke’s providentialism was informing his felt state and how he perceived himself. His exercise of the belief in his daily, ritual ‘self-making’ was endorsing a state of becoming, a state of anticipation for the providences he would receive and the affections that he would feel. The section that follows will now look closer at the relationship between his providentialism and his search for feeling.

⁹¹ Blair Worden, ‘Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England’, *P&P*, 109 (1985), 55.

4.3. In Search of Feeling

This section continues to explain the anticipative state inspired by Meeke's providentialism. It will argue that Meeke's subjective experience can be characterised as a search for feeling. His alertness to sin determined his alertness to provocation of God's displeasure, but while he feared judgement the affections wrought by it were not unwelcome because 'affectivity was an index of the true Christian life'.⁹² Feeling emotions, or affections, in a disciplined and channelled way could be a guide 'on the road to godliness', and they were not a 'hindrance' but a 'tool'.⁹³ By being affected Meeke hoped to overcome sin and to have his heart softened by God, and thereby be blessed by his spirit. His anticipation of providence was therefore also a search for feeling in his 'state of becoming'.⁹⁴ This section will make this argument first by demonstrating why Meeke sought affections and rejected the dullness of a 'stony heart', expressed in language he shared with godly writers of the seventeenth century. It will then show how he exercised his providentialism in such a way that promoted this search of feeling.

A theme that emerges in the diary is Meeke's desire for his heart to be softened, for God to 'creat in me a humble and contrite; a holy and clean heart'.⁹⁵ What he feared was having a hard heart closed to God, and he would therefore examine his heart for 'outward signs of saving grace' and study his ability to be affected: he searched for feeling.⁹⁶ This correlation between the state of Meeke's heart and his affections stems from humoral physiology. For Renaissance physicians, the soul and body existed as

⁹² Adrian Chastain Weimer, 'Affliction and the Stony Heart in Early New England', in Ryrie and Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism*, 129.

⁹³ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 17-8.

⁹⁴ Webster, 'Writing', 55.

⁹⁵ KX367, 7.

⁹⁶ Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London, 1972), 9; Haller, *Puritanism*, 38.

one and 'in order to implement the desires of the soul the heart required humour'. The heart then 'concocted' the spirits sent around the body – the result was what we would recognise as emotions.⁹⁷ Thus, emotional states consisted of humoral concoctions, determined by the soul and implemented by the heart. What one felt in one's heart was indicative of more than just a physiological state: it was also a psychological and spiritual state. The examination of affection and the heart was therefore also an examination of spiritual health.

In addition to humoral physiology Meeke had probably been educated in new medical ideas, such as William Harvey's discovery of blood circulation in 1629 which along with the Cartesian separation of mind from body altered the role of the heart, as the mind became 'the origin of knowledge and consciousness'.⁹⁸ In the autobiographical tradition that Meeke was operating, however, the language and understanding of the heart continued to carry humoral overtones. He frequently refers to a dull, dead, and cold heart which prohibited any ability to feel warm affections. He would write of being 'out of frame', 'very dry and barren, dull and empty in meditacion', or having a 'disordered' and 'dull frame of heart, a wandring, vain mind and cold affecions'.⁹⁹ He tied the state of his heart to the state of his affections: 'it is a very cold day dark thick and rimy, my heart is as hard as the frost, my conscience as senseless as one benumbed; and my affecions. Dull and cold'.¹⁰⁰ To be clear, 'affections', 'passions' and 'appetites' featured in the Christian theology of the soul. Appetites were the 'movements of the lower animal soul', passions were the rebellion 'of the body to the soul', including hate, fear, anger, and 'affections' were 'acts of the

⁹⁷ Fay Bound Alberti, 'Emotions in the Early Modern Medical Tradition', in *idem.* (ed.), *Medicine, Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950* (Basingstoke, 2006), 1-21, quoted at 5-6.

⁹⁸ Bound Alberti, 'Emotions in the Early Modern Medical Tradition', 7.

⁹⁹ KX367, 230, 163, 302.

¹⁰⁰ KX367, 99.

higher rational soul', such as sympathy, love and joy. Passions and appetites could be suppressed only through the exertion of a 'holy' will over the 'carnal will', and thus affections were sought above all.¹⁰¹

Meeke's fear of dull-heartedness was shared with other spiritual diarists. Ralph Josselin reflected in 1658 that he was 'in a very dead frame, without sense and life in my spirit ... I was much troubled to find my heart in this frame, I could not pray, nor meditate'.¹⁰² Elizabeth Bury in 1715 wrote of her practice to rise early and meditate in her closet, where she 'tugg'd long at my dull Heart in secret, but could not reach the lively Frame sometimes allow'd', hoping for God to 'melt my dull Heart with the distinguishing unparallel'd Kindness always shew'd to unworthy me'.¹⁰³ Dullness was also expressed as hardness or 'stoniness', such as when Meeke described his heart as 'naturally stony, and barren like ground unbroken up'.¹⁰⁴

The reason that Meeke, Josselin and Bury feared this cold, dull, hard or stony heart was that a hard heart was incapable of affection and 'blankly indifferent to God'. Deadness of the heart betrayed a deadness of spirit.¹⁰⁵ Such a state bore resemblance to the dreaded state of 'security' mentioned above, the false sense that one had attained assurance. We can see Meeke's aversion to security in this 1692 excerpt, where he laments his unresponsiveness to providences:

so often repeated and so highly aggravated are my sins that without infinite mercy I am miserable, no threatenings tho terrible nor mercies nor promises

¹⁰¹ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, 2003), 21-2.

¹⁰² Alan MacFarlane (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (Oxford, 1976), 420.

¹⁰³ Samuel Bury, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Elizabeth Bury* (1720), 85, 169.

¹⁰⁴ KX367, 143.

¹⁰⁵ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 20-1. See also Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2016), ch. 4.

tho most comfortable have hitherto prevailed with me to forsake my lusts, so hard is my heart and secure my conscience.¹⁰⁶

He feared a hard heart and a secure conscience: the signs of being ‘spiritually endangered’. To be ‘spiritually healthy’ one needed a soft heart and so in 1704 when he perceived his coldness overcoming him again Meeke wrote ‘Lord, quicken, warm, help me’.¹⁰⁷ One of the ways in which God might soften his heart would be to send mercies and afflictions which might quicken and promote affection. These providences were only effective if Meeke observed, accounted and remembered them appropriately, in his diary, and watched closely his feelings and his heart. As Ryrie puts it, he needed to ‘cultivate’ his affections.¹⁰⁸ What this suggests is that Meeke’s exercise of providentialism involved the search of feeling as much as the search of God’s hand in daily events.¹⁰⁹

We can see that Meeke’s anticipation of those providences was designed to awaken his heart and affectivity, for example in November 1691:

in the midst of my study this forenoon I suddenly fell into sin ... I am affraid my heart is so hard, my corruption so strong, that sin will reign; until I be some way or other softened by the hand of god; lord let it be by the finger of thy spirit not by the heavier hand of thy wrath; lord work upon me by thy word & spirit not by thy rod; but if I must be corrected before amended; in the mist of correcion o lord remember compassion.¹¹⁰

While Meeke might have feared these afflictions and the impervious nature of his heart, elsewhere he expresses that such providences could have their desired effect: ‘God hath been pleased to affect and awaken my conscience and to soften my heart by his providences; so that I hope no more to be overcome by such sins as have had too

¹⁰⁶ KX367, 109.

¹⁰⁷ Weimer, ‘Affliction’, 124; KX367, 526.

¹⁰⁸ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 17-27.

¹⁰⁹ Weimer, ‘Affliction’, 124.

¹¹⁰ KX367, 90.

great a command over me'.¹¹¹ These two examples demonstrate how Meeke's exercise of providentialism involved emotional introspection. They also reveal his hopes that affection would come from the providences he had anticipated in his daily self-examination and writing. These examples therefore illustrate that the anticipation of feeling was part of Meeke's subjective experience of providentialism.

An entry that highlights this dimension of Meeke's providentialism is 24 November 1703, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter.¹¹² In full, Meeke's entry reads:

This morning in my morning duty called to mind god's mercies towards me upon severall accounts, both in spareing punishing and provideing: his mercies have been great, punishments few and easie, for circumstance very admirable in choosing time and place, which at other times and places would have been very heavie. My heart in the thinking of these things was affected a little. Lord, grant me holy affections sutable to thy love and compassion.¹¹³

Here Meeke exercises his providentialism by meditating on those mercies he had received, and by creating a monument to them by recording them in his diary. The anticipative state rendered by that providentialism is referenced in his imagining those punishments 'which at other times and places would have been very heavie'. He observes that such exercise moved his heart and provoked affection, which was a good sign that he was receptive to those mercies and that God could 'quicken' this site so crucial to his spiritual health. The entry is completed by making the link between affectivity and piety clear by praying for further 'holy affections' that would bring him closer to God's grace.

¹¹¹ KX367, 253.

¹¹² This was a week where the weather brought providence into the minds of many English people, being the week of the Great Storm where thousands of lives were lost on land and at sea, and millions of pounds worth of damage was seen across England and Wales, and across the Continent. See Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (London, 2007), ch. 2.

¹¹³ KX367, 517.

This is what Meeke's providentialism amounted to as it was exercised in his diary. In 'thinking of these things' (these providences) he hoped he would be moved into affection and that he would realise his receptiveness to God's presence in his life. This result is what he searched for in his daily self-making, when he studied his sins and anticipated afflictions. With each new entry, each confession, resolution and nod to providence, he was in a state of becoming, renewing in each entry his search for a softened heart. We can therefore describe Meeke's subjective experience of providentialism as 'in search of feeling'.

4.4. Conclusion

This case study of Robert Meeke, a thoroughly self-conscious, watchful and modest curate, has allowed this study to observe some threads of continuity in the exercise and experience of providentialism between the early seventeenth century right through to the early eighteenth. The main vehicle of that continuity has been Meeke's spiritual diary. His intensive introspection, preoccupation with natural corruption and watchfulness identify this as such a diary, demonstrating the continuing value that some individuals placed in this type of personal account. Meeke's diary was his instrument to re-write, re-form and renew himself in each daily record, encouraging us to see him in a 'state of becoming'.¹¹⁴ Each entry was as much an act of anticipation as it was of memory.

Meeke exercised personal providentialism in his self-writing, expressed through recognisable language shared with contemporary diarists. However, his focus on the duality of providence, particularly on correcting afflictions, firmly places this in the

¹¹⁴ Webster, 'Writing', 55.

company of other spiritual diaries. Meeke's alertness to how his sins provoked corrective providences led to his anticipation of those afflictions, sometimes with dread but generally with an acceptance that to feel God's chastisement was preferable to feeling nothing. A state of anticipation was therefore a characteristic of Meeke's subjective experience of providentialism.

Also featuring in Meeke's subjective experience was the desire for a 'holy and clean' and softened heart, a mark of spiritual health and receptiveness to God. To avoid deadness or dullness Meeke 'cultivated' his affections through his providentialism. He watched his feelings closely in the diary, and in observing, accounting, remembering *and* anticipating providences, he was also in search of feeling, looking for those signs of God's warmth and care.

Meeke's case study has therefore demonstrated the continuity of personal providentialism and spiritual diary-keeping in this period. It has shown that because providentialism was exercised in a site of agency and self-making, it too featured in the shaping of self. Like Freke's remembrances Meeke's diary encourages recognition of how providentialism was subjective by its very nature. Even when practiced in an established 'type' of personal account we can see that the subjectivity of providentialism allowed individuals to practice it as they saw fit: in a way that reflected their religiosity and interests and ensured its continuing utility.

As a final note, this chapter has also demonstrated that the life of the godly was not all doom and gloom. Undoubtedly, Meeke's preoccupation with sin and punishment can read as an obsession with shortcomings and failure, corresponding

with the stereotypical despairing puritan.¹¹⁵ In accordance to Ryrie's findings, however, Meeke's diary and providentialism shows how the 'gloom' of that stereotype 'belies the joy and delight in Christ's presence for which puritans consistently strove'.¹¹⁶ The gloomier aspects of his providentialism were more a means of pursuing God's presence in his life, which would be marked by a softened heart, joy and peace, than an end in themselves. Chapter 5 will now demonstrate more clearly how providentialism could inspire and consolidate positive modes of feeling, rather than gloomy ones. As we will see, however, Samuel Jeake's providentialism is markedly different to his contemporary Robert Meeke's, and Jeake's diary will allow this study to identify areas of change, as well as continuity.

¹¹⁵ D. Leverenz, *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980); John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991).

¹¹⁶ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 58, also cited in Walsham, 'Happiness of Suffering', 59.

5. Samuel Jeake, Smiling Providences, and Confidence

Unlike chapter 4, which emphasised continuities in the experience of providentialism, this chapter uses a case study that also suggests change. The writer is the nonconformist merchant and astrologer Samuel Jeake (1652-99). It will be argued that Jeake's diary, which was a review of memoranda filled out with memories written in 1694, exemplifies personal providentialism. It will also argue that Jeake's personal providentialism was exercised in a slightly different way to other diarists examined in this thesis. He omitted providential punishments almost entirely in his diary and observed, accounted and remembered only smiling providences. This suggests a shift in attitudes towards a view of providence as the manifestation of a benevolent God, rather than a wrathful one. When compared to the diary of Robert Meeke, Jeake's contemporary, the difference is striking. This finding advances the main argument made in this thesis, namely that the subjectivity of providentialism allowed individuals to mould the idea and practice to suit their interests and concerns. The subjectivity with which the belief was exercised therefore made it adaptable to the shifting conditions this period of transition presented.

This argument is furthered when we observe how Jeake combined providential ideas with astrological principles, and synthesised these explanatory frameworks into something serviceable. Jeake's astrological investigations were deeply influenced by the new science and philosophy, and his desire to create a rationalistic form of

astrology sat alongside his providentialism. This again shows how the subjective nature of providence allowed individuals to adapt and mould it into a form that fitted their lives.

Finally, it will be argued that Jeake's exercise of providentialism inspired a quiet and considered confidence, which he drew from observing how providence smiled upon his endeavours and worked for his good. This finding supports the argument that the exercise of personal providentialism was facilitated by self-writing and that it could engender feeling and inform self-perception.

Section 5.1. provides essential context from Jeake's background, such as his commercial and intellectual interests. Section 5.2. then focuses on Jeake's 1694 diary and how it correlates with his other writings. This section explains the composition of the diary and explores what might have motivated Jeake to write it. Section 5.3. then examines Jeake's providentialism, and establishes that he exercised personal providentialism in the diary. It then characterises his subjective experience of providentialism. This will be achieved by looking at Jeake's focus on deliverance and by comparing it to contemporary diaries which, in their contrast, illustrate his selection of only smiling providences. Discussion then moves to Jeake's astrological interests and inquiries, and explains the relationship between providential and astrological ideas in the diary. Finally, this section demonstrates how a sense of confidence arose from Jeake's providentialism, as seen in how he applied providence to accounts of accidents and of his commercial ventures.

5.1. Samuel Jeake (1652-99)

Jeake belonged to the same generation as Robert Meeke, born during the Interregnum in England, a decade after Elizabeth Freke (1642-1714), and two decades after Thomas Rokeby (c.1631-1699). Jeake predeceased all of these writers, dying from a stroke on 22 November 1699, aged 47.¹ This ‘earnest, self-preoccupied’ and ‘conscientious’ man spent most of his life in the town in which he was born: Rye, in Sussex.² The first known Jeake in Rye was the merchant William Jeake in late sixteenth-century, the diarist’s great-grandfather. His grandfather, the baker Henry Jeake, had married a woman from a puritan background, Anne Peerson. His father, Samuel Jeake (‘Jeake senior’, 1623-90) also married a pious woman, Frances Hartridge.³ His parents were prominent members of the godly community in Sussex, his father a leading and public figure amongst Rye’s nonconformists who served as the town clerk during the 1650s.⁴ Through the Hartridge and Jeake families Samuel belonged to a large kinship and friendship network underwritten by nonconformist connections which spread across Kent, Sussex, and London.⁵ His immediate family was smaller. His mother and her baby girl died during childbirth in 1654, and his brother Thomas died in 1656. Samuel thus grew up under the care of his father who never re-married and with whom he shared a close relationship until his father’s death in 1690.⁶

¹ Michael Hunter, ‘Jeake, Samuel (1652-1699)’, *ODNB* (published online 23 September 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14675> (accessed 11 December 2017).

² Michael Hunter and Annabel Gregory (eds.), *An Astrological Diary of the Seventeenth Century: Samuel Jeake of Rye 1652-1699* (Oxford, 1988), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴ See references to the Jeake family letters in Anthony Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-1660* (London, 1975), chapter 3, and ‘Puritanism in Seventeenth Century Sussex’, in M. J. Kitch (ed.), *Studies in Sussex Church History* (London, 1981), 141-55, cited in Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 85, 86.

Jeake suffered poor health.⁷ His 1694 diary details his physical condition right down to the emergence of his first teeth and the date he was weaned.⁸ Throughout his adolescence and twenties he suffered from various illnesses and ailments, including smallpox and then agues during the 1670s.⁹ His weak constitution did not, however, deter him from pursuing a marriage partner. In June 1680, after several unsuccessful courtships, he began negotiating with the recently-widowed Barbara Hartshorne with a view to marry her twelve-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. Barbara's husband had been master of Rye Grammar School and Jeake's friend and had died in 1680, perhaps leaving a widow looking for a man to join her household.¹⁰

Both Barbara Hartshorne and Jeake attempted a 'hard bargain' over the marriage settlement, which was resolved with Samuel 'betrothed and contracted to Eliz, in the presence of witnesses'. In August 1680 Jeake moved into his prospective mother-in-law's house on Middle Street (now Mermaid Street), a house which he 'was to have in part of the portion'.¹¹ They married the following March, once Elizabeth had turned thirteen. Jeake's age at the time of marriage, being twenty-eight, was fairly typical for the time.¹² Marriage to a girl so young was far more unusual, and the consummation just two days later even more so considering the risk of parturition before the age of sixteen.¹³ Officially, the age of consent for marriage was over the age of seven, though

⁷ See his description of himself, also discussed below, *Ibid.*, 117-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 50-8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 150-4.

¹² See the age of marriage table in E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 255, cited in Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London, 2009), 6. See also Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1996), chs 1 and 5; Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), ch. 3, esp. 67-70; Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2009), 61, 62.

¹³ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), cited in Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 37.

as a rule ‘the English married late’.¹⁴ We might infer from this irregularity that Jeake’s decision was perhaps driven by the financial enticement of the marriage settlement, though later it appears the marriage was an affectionate one.¹⁵ Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering she was so young, Elizabeth suffered through a difficult birth in 1682, and their first child died from injuries sustained during the delivery. Four Jeake children survived, Elizabeth, Barbara, Samuel and Francis, though they lost a son, Manasseh, in 1690.¹⁶

Rye was a port of ‘intermediate size’, prominent during the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, though declining by Jeake’s time as the fishing industry moved to nearby Hastings when the port began to silt up. Commodities continued to be traded there, however, particularly wool, hops, cereals and herring from the domestic market and imports of cloth and wine from France.¹⁷ The town’s adult population was split between conformists and nonconformists and its conventicle, led by Jeake senior, was attended by around one hundred.¹⁸ Following the Restoration, Jeake senior was quickly stripped of his duties as town clerk after legislation was passed in 1661 restricting the rights of nonconformists, though it took some time for the Conventicle Act of 1664 and Five Mile Act of 1665 to be enforced in the town. When it was, in the 1670s and early 1680s, Jeake senior was a target for the local Tory court party. He was excommunicated in 1676, his conventicle outlawed in 1681, and attempts were made for his arrest by 1682, which he escaped by fleeing to London.¹⁹

¹⁴ Wrightson, *English Society*, 68.

¹⁵ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 36-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62. See also William Holloway, *The History and Antiquities of the Town and Port of Rye* (London, 1847); L. A. Vidler, *A New History of Rye* (Hove, 1934); M. J. Burchall, ‘Inhabitants of Rye in 1660’, *Sussex Genealogist and Local Historian*, 4 (1982), 97-108, cited by Hunter and Gregory at xii-xiii.

¹⁸ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-33.

Jeake (the diarist) was not immune to this persecution. His father remained in exile for the next five years, and Jeake had to escape Rye and join him between October 1683 and May 1684.²⁰ Jeake evaded arrest until 1686 when the punitive legislation was relaxed under James II.²¹ Though under William III Jeake was again permitted to hold public office, he did not seek it. He was made a freeman of the town in 1690, overseer of the poor in 1686, and surveyor of the highways in 1693, though through an arrangement whereby he acted on the town's behalf in financial matters he was excused of further office.²² Unlike his father, he also avoided leadership in the meeting-house, though in the late 1690s he purchased property for the construction of a new meeting house next to his own house on Middle Street.²³ Thus we can see that Jeake was hardly inconspicuous in his home-town, but he did not seek the publicity or seniority his father had.

Instead, Jeake pursued the betterment of himself and his family's security. He sought the career of a merchant, having found the profits from his 'scrivening' underwhelming.²⁴ Jeake's early career was overseen by dissenting merchant Thomas Miller, though not in a formal apprenticeship. Like Miller his role was essentially to act as a 'middleman' in the trade of domestic and imported commodities.²⁵ By the late 1670s he had diversified by lending money in Rye and by the late 1680s he had expanded his business in overseas trade.²⁶ He discovered, however, that the life of a merchant could be uncertain and unpredictable circumstances could greatly affect his security. In the early 1690s Jeake found himself in a difficult position so he diversified

²⁰ For Jeake's account of persecution of the Rye nonconformist community see especially *Ibid.*, 159, 161, 163-5, 167, 170.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 33-4.

²² *Ibid.*, 34.

²³ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4, 60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62-6, 68.

further by investing in public debt and in East India Company stock.²⁷ By the end of his life in 1699 these financial endeavours were his main source of income, meaning that he had fully embraced the risk-ridden life of investor.²⁸

Jeake was therefore a hard-working individual with an adaptable mind, and his intellectual interests advance this portrait further. He was educated by his father, who taught him mathematics, grammar, Latin, Greek, logic and rhetoric, geography, philology, natural sciences, shorthand and scrivening, poetry, and calligraphy.²⁹ As an adolescent Jeake began a list of the books he had read and by age the age of fifteen this contained 124 titles covering many subjects, though puritan theology featured most prominently.³⁰ From his father's collection he had read works by early seventeenth-century godly divines, such as Richard Rogers and Thomas Beard, and later biographies and autobiographies by John Bunyan, Henry Jessey, and John Owen.³¹ His reading was not myopic, however. He surveyed works by Royalist writers, and during the 1680s and 1690s he lists works by Anglican churchmen such as Robert Sanderson, Edward Stillingfleet, and by the Cambridge Platonist Henry More.³²

Works of the new philosophy also featured on the list, including those by Descartes, Sir Kenelm Digby and Joseph Glanvill. These joined works on alchemy, medicine, history, poetry and more literary pieces. As discussed below, astrology became his constant study from 1667. Jeake's reading reveals a curiosity which,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67-9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 69-72. See also P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit 1688-1756* (London, 1967).

²⁹ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 40.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42-3. Many of these are in the list Jeake compiles of the 124 books he had read before 1667 - for exact titles and editions see 92-7.

³² *Ibid.*, 44.

together with the care taken to record and order his study, suggests a correlation between his intellectual temperament and the thirst for order, knowledge and quantification characteristic of the new scientific age. Indeed, he was known to the Royal Society, having submitted his father's mathematical manuscripts for approval; Edmond Halley vetted these works, and approval for publication was granted.³³ He was also acquainted with John Harris, FRS, and fellow astrologers John Kendal and Henry Coley.³⁴

This brief sketch suggests that Jeake was an individual engaged in many interests and concerns. His background was puritan and as a young man he had read puritan theology and the lives of eminent divines, works he would continue to read throughout his life. The figure who imparted this knowledge to him, who shared his books on mathematics and natural philosophy, was one with whom Jeake shared the closest of relationships: his father. Jeake's pursuit of posthumous publication of his father's work and his seeking approval from the one of the most fashionable and distinguished organisations of the time demonstrates his continued devotion to this man. The analytical skills Jeake had gained from his father's tutelage were eventually applied to his professional career, where he expanded his ventures to adapt to uncertain and unpredictable conditions.

Overall, Jeake appears to have been a self-aware, pious and materially-motivated individual who craved knowledge and sought order. The details of his life that might appear as contrasting, such as his piety and thirst for material success, his 'scientific exactitude' and astrological practice, remind us of the variety of concerns late seventeenth-century writers held. His writings, and the exercise of providentialism

³³ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47-8.

they facilitated, reflect the ‘eclectic mixture’ of his interests and highlight how personal providentialism continued to be practiced and adapted amidst new ideologies.³⁵

5.2. Jeake’s Diary and Other Writings

The main source consulted in this chapter is a diary written by Jeake in 1694. ‘Diary’, though a useful shorthand, is perhaps misleading here because the text is a retrospective narrative more like a review or autobiography, constructed out of previous writings. The fluidity of the text echoes the findings of chapter 2, that early modern personal accounts are not easily pigeonholed into modern genres, and that they instead resist formal boundaries.³⁶ Providence is invoked throughout the 1694 diary and it can therefore provide valuable insight into the subjective experience of providentialism from this middling, nonconformist merchant. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, however, understanding the subjective experience and utility of providentialism for these individuals requires some understanding of how their personal accounts were composed, some reconstruction of the creative act of memory involved in self-writing. Doing so allows us to see how personal providentialism was exercised – through observing, accounting and remembering – and the way in which providence engendered distinct modes of feeling and informed selfhood. This next section will explain the composition and context of Jeake’s writing in order to achieve this fuller picture of his providentialism.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁶ A point also suggested by Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 24.

The 1694 diary was published in an edition by Michael Hunter and Annabel Gregory.³⁷ In addition to the transliteration of Jeake's 1694 diary, and of a short diary from 1699, Hunter and Gregory provide an extensive introduction which points to the archive sources relating to Samuel Jeake.³⁸ Jeake began writing a diary in July 1666, though these early attempts have not survived. The diary-writing he began in 1666 he then continued throughout his life, meaning that from the age of fourteen he was a self-writer practiced in the routine exercise of compiling and shaping his experiences in written form.

Jeake began writing the main diary in July 1694, working from various sources, such as old diaries and memoranda, and also from memory. The account begins with Jeake's birth in 1652 and runs up to the date of completion in November 1694.³⁹ The content of the diary is written into dated entries of varying frequency, and mainly concern Jeake's business ventures, his health, the persecution of Rye's nonconformists, and some observations of public events and of his family life, such as the health of his children. The diary also details Jeake's intellectual interests such as the books he read and also his astrological investigations, mostly demonstrated in the drawing of horoscopes and observations of the planets at particular times. Jeake also used the diary to record accidents or events he considered notable or unusual.

Of the materials Jeake drew on to write the 1694 diary two sources have survived. One is a set of shorthand notes, written on the back of a letter from 1685, the other a

³⁷ Michael Hunter and Annabel Gregory (eds.), *An Astrological Diary of the Seventeenth Century: Samuel Jeake of Rye 1652-1699* (Oxford, 1988).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-81. Relevant manuscripts (and collections) include, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, MS J43M3/D540 (main 1694 diary) and MS J43M3/A859 (*Astrological Experiments Exemplified*); East Sussex County Record Office, Lewes, Frewen Archive (includes family correspondence, Jeake's ledger); Rye Museum, Rye, East Sussex, Selmes MSS (includes Jeake's school books, calligraphic exercises, accounts for the 1670s, 1699 shorthand diary and astrology manuscripts), cited by Hunter and Gregory at xii-xii; 1-80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

detailed account of Jeake's experiences from the year 1687-8, titled *Astrological Experiments Exemplified*, which is primarily concerned with his professional interests, written in both longhand and shorthand.⁴⁰ Jeake explains in his diary his intention in writing the *Experiments*: to 'a complete Systeme of Solar Revolutional Directions attended on by their respectively proportionable Effects during the space of one whole year'. He worked on the draft of this project in 'spare hours' from October 1688 to June 1692, after which he presented a copy to his fellow astrologer Henry Coley in London for him to 'peruse'.⁴¹ It was not, therefore, a private exercise.

Reflecting on recording events for the *Experiments* in his 1694 diary, in an entry for 5 July 1687, Jeake writes:

From this day inclusive till July 4th 1688 viz. for the space of one whole year, I kept a perfect Diary of all the material Accidents befalling me all receipts & payments of money, buying & selling of goods, journeys, sicknesses &c in order to the making Astrological Experiments. So that being registred there I shall not here transcribe so prolix & unnecessary an Enumeration of them but only select such particulars as may seem pertinent to my present design.⁴²

The entries in the 1694 diary for the year 1687-8 were therefore drawn from *Experiments*. They are ordered, concise, and mostly concern business, his family's health, and the accidents he suffered or fortunately avoided. These entries are fairly representative of the content of the diary as a whole, with exception to longer accounts of accidents, horoscopes or significant events. What is important about this entry is that it gives a sense of Jeake's approach to selecting the content of his diary; we can see him working from another account and shaping content into a new design, shaping his written self anew.

⁴⁰ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 22 and East Sussex County Record Office, Lewes, FRE 5209, cited at 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 194-5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 185.

As discussed in chapter 2, there are moments when we can see a self-writer ‘at work’, involved in ‘a choosing, a highlighting, a shaping, an enshrinement’, moments that encourage us to see first-person accounts as ‘not simply that which has escaped forgetting’.⁴³ The 5 July 1687 entry is such a moment because Jeake makes clear that writing his diary involved, ‘select[ing] such particulars as may seem pertinent to my present design’. It suggests that he perceived the writing of this account as an enterprise, an interaction between his other accounts and his memory. His engagement in a process of selection and embellishment is also visible in this excerpt from 1663, where he describes his conversion, aged eleven:

This year (as I mind) on a Lord’s day in the evening; a Prodigy (whether true or false I know not) related at my Father’s house *by John A.* was the first occasion of my Conversion, & serious thoughts about my future condition. The Prodigy (as my memory serves me) was thus ...⁴⁴

The parenthetical comments illustrate the margin of error involved in Jeake’s recollection of the event in question. They make explicit what is implicit in the rest of the diary: that Jeake called upon his memory not just to fill in gaps in his written accounts, but to prioritise, shape and re-form the recollections into something serviceable. The act of memory involved was not just a summoning of the past, but a shaping of present and future living. In this 1694 diary, therefore, we can see how Jeake re-wrote what was enshrined, and how he embellished, cut and rearranged his memories and his written self in order to create a new monument.

Hunter and Gregory’s edition also provides a transliteration of Jeake’s shorthand diary spanning March to October 1699.⁴⁵ They suggest that he had kept a diary

⁴³ Wendy J. Wiener and G. C. Rosenwald, ‘A Moment’s Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary’, in T. L. Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (Abingdon, 2007), iv, 66.

⁴⁴ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 87.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 253-9.

throughout the 1690s, though if he did these records are lost. They also suggest that this fragment might resemble the kind of notes Jeake kept throughout his life.⁴⁶ The content of the fragment is certainly similar to that of the 1694 diary, though is written in a choppy, rougher tone, creating a greater sense of proximity to the events related, which supports their suggestion. We should bear in mind, however, that Jeake's diary-writing was likely altered by his other writings, which demanded detail and accuracy in order to draw horoscopes.⁴⁷ For example, an entry from the 1699 diary reads, 'About 9h 30' a.m. or if any mistake then a little before, I bought a hopgarden of Mr. Bishop at £8 per hundred'.⁴⁸ The margin of error Jeake provides appears to be a note to his future self, for his future astrological work that may require accurate time-keeping.

This 1699 fragment and the 1687 *Experiments* suggest that Jeake wrote his diaries or memoranda with a view to re-reading them, and potentially his re-working and re-writing the personal history contained within them. What this tells us is that, for Jeake, self-writing was an ongoing enterprise and an exercise in the mobilization of memory to shape his personal history for new designs. It was a creative act of memory, not just reflecting and shaping perceptions of a past self but also about the present and future writing self and written self. As we shall see, Jeake's providentialism was part of that act of memory, and it was also about more than recollection. It was about him making use of providence at the time of writing, adapting it for present and future purposes.

The audience for the 1687 *Experiments* and the 1699 shorthand diary seems fairly clear; one for fellow astrologers whose good opinion he sought, and one for himself (and perhaps eventually for others, in a re-written form). The audience for Jeake's 1694 diary is less clear. Jeake comes across as a self-aware writer, and Hunter and

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

Gregory argue that there is a ‘literary quality’ to the diary, discernible in the long and careful reportage of events and conversations.⁴⁹ Unlike John Rastrick, Heneage Dering or James Fretwell mentioned in chapter 2, who addressed their writing to family or ‘prosperity’, Jeake has not addressed an audience outright.⁵⁰ He did, however, reach for a reader through interjections in parentheses and when he announced the end of the diary with ‘This Evening I finished the present Diary to this Instant 29th of November 1694’. The omission of embarrassing events or ‘episodes which reflected badly’ on him also suggests this was not a wholly private document.⁵¹

This conclusion is also suggested by Jeake’s use of shorthand.⁵² His father had instructed him in shorthand, and he used it for memoranda, drafts of letters and sermon notes.⁵³ In the diary, Jeake used shorthand for passages he wished to conceal, which usually correlate with three topics: his unsuccessful courtships in the 1670s, marital sex, and the progress of pregnancies.⁵⁴ His family life therefore required concealment, more so than his religious, intellectual or business reflections. Perhaps the concealment was a precautionary measure against his family’s future reading, or perhaps he was embarrassed by seeing those details in longhand, in black and white. His use of encryption does at least signify that he was wary of a reader and, as could be seen in Rokeby’s diary, the awareness of a potential reader immediately renders the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 26-7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 25-6, 250.

⁵² A summary of Jeake’s shorthand is provided Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 279-80, and is suggested to be similar to contemporary printed manuals, but most closely resembles Edmond Willis’ *An Abbreviation of Wirting by Character* (1618). They also refer to E. H. Butler, *The Story of British Shorthand* (London, 1951). See also W. J. Carlton, *Bibliotheca Pepsiana: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Library of Samuel Pepys, Part 4: Shorthand Books* (London, 1940); Thomas Shelton, *A Tutor to Tachygraphy: Or, Short-Writing*, ed. William Matthews (1642; 1647; Los Angeles, CA, 1970); William Matthews, *English Pronunciation and Shorthand in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley, CA, 1943).

⁵³ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

personal account in some way public, the writer becoming attuned to appraisal by external eyes.

These autobiographical works were only a portion of Jeake's writings. Others included a volume written in during the mid-1660s, titled 'Some Letters concerning the Return of the ten Tribes of Israel &c', regarding the 'supposed messiah Sabbatai Sevi', and an unpublished tract exploring astrological principles titled *Diapson. The Harmony of the Signes of Heaven*, written 1671-2 (Jeake's astrological interests are discussed below).⁵⁵ He also compiled a collection of 'Some Prodigies, Remarkable and signall Judgements on divers Persons &c beginning Ano Christi 1664', gathered from both printed sources and first-hand experience, inspired by published tracts of unusual natural phenomena.⁵⁶ Jeake showed further interest in observing and recording the natural world in a weather diary, which he kept from 1670-77 in an effort to examine the astrological effects upon weather.⁵⁷ This body of work shows that Jeake invested his time in organising his observations and knowledge, and that his self-writing needs to be seen in the context of that inquiry, within the routine and practice of observation, accounting and scrutiny of his world.

So far this section has suggested that the 1694 diary depicts Jeake 'at work' in an exercise of re-shaping; he re-shaped his past written accounts, and selected those elements that were 'pertinent to [his] present design'. He also embroidered those written accounts with recollections. Jeake was therefore engaged in a creative act of

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7. On contemporary interest in prodigies see William E. Burns, *An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, Politics and Providence in England 1657-1727* (Manchester, 2002); A. W. Bates, *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2005); Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London, 1993); Vladimir Janković, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather 1650-1820* (Manchester, 2000).

⁵⁷ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 107. On weather diarists see Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (London, 2007).

memory which was about more than not forgetting the past, but about mobilizing memory to service his present and his future. We can then accept that any exercise of providence in the diary will not just be the recording of past deliverances for the sake of not forgetting them, but an exercise of observing, accounting and remembering for present and future purposes, indicative of Jeake's providentialism at the time of writing in 1694.

From his other first-person accounts, we can see that Jeake wrote with a view to re-read or re-work content, therefore writing for his future self. Texts such as *Astrological Experiments Exemplified* demonstrate that he was utilising that content in works designed for an audience. We cannot therefore assume that the 1694 diary was a wholly private enterprise. The other texts he wrote highlight that the diary was imagined by a lively and inquiring mind, and we should set it within the context of scrutiny and meticulous recording. What has not yet been explored in this section, however, is what might have motivated Jeake to write the diary. This is important because understanding the nature of Jeake's 'present design', and the role of providence in that design, will help recover his subjective experience of providentialism.

Assessing Jeake's motivations in writing the diary is necessarily imprecise. We cannot recover, for certain, why he picked up his pen. But there are some indications as to the kind of design he had in mind. We can start with the title of the diary, which is an apt description of the concerns and content presented within its pages:

A Diary of the Actions & Accidents of my Life: tending partly to observe & memorize the Providences therein manifested; & partly to investigate the

*Measure of Time in Astronomical Directions, and to determine the Astrall Causes, &tc, Rye Begun July 12 1694.*⁵⁸

This title suggests that the diary is a synthesis of Jeake's propensity for meticulous observation and accounting, his curiosity and investigation of the natural world using astrological principles, and his exercise of providentialism through observing, accounting and remembering the operations of providence in his life. The diary is therefore a design that reflects three of Jeake's key concerns: his work, his astrological inquiries, and his providentialism. These are the predominant ingredients in the 'eclectic mixture' that make the diary so unusual and valuable.⁵⁹

It was due to this 'mixture' of interests that Jeake's diary was used above to demonstrate the influence of the spiritual diary and how writers adapted it to produce accounts that reflected their interests. Hunter and Gregory suggest that the diary resembles the 'autobiographical writing associated with the Puritans', and we know from his diary that Jeake had read, or was aware of, the canon of puritan autobiography which instructed a reader in recording spiritual progress.⁶⁰ There are points in the diary that exhibit this influence, for example, in how he notes moments of 'Conversion' in 1663-64, when it 'pleased God to work in me a more effectual sorrow for sin'.⁶¹ His observations of providence are also expressed through typical phrases common to spiritual diaries, such as 'Thanks be to God', or 'it pleased God', or 'by God's blessing'.⁶²

Jeake's 1694 diary is not, however, a spiritual diary in the traditional sense and his motivations in writing the account were not exclusively religious. The diary does

⁵⁸ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 85.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 87, 88.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 133, 136, 143.

not possess key characteristics of the spiritual diary, such as passages of self-examination or introspection provoked by sermons or prayer as was seen in Meeke's diary. It is possible that Jeake's earliest diary-writing from 1666 was for this purpose, or that he recorded his spiritual activities and reflections elsewhere.⁶³ Indeed, Jeake does write about keeping a 'Catalogue of sins committed by me, in order to a deeper humiliation'. He stopped keeping this catalogue in 1667, of which he recollects in 1694,

but now considering, that God hath blotted out as a thick Cloud my Transgressions, & as a Cloud my Sins: why should I give occasion to Man to revive the memory of that which God will remember no more.⁶⁴

This is an intriguing statement. It suggests that, for Jeake, because humankind had been redeemed through Christ his sins should be of no concern to man and not worthy of remembrance. Considering his puritan background, his education and relationship with his father (figurehead of the Rye godly community), and his consequent indoctrination in the importance of self-examination, this is a surprising position for him to take. The diary is certainly not a receptacle for outpourings of his transgressive heart. Overall, it appears that in this account Jeake departed from the practice of keeping a spiritual diary in the formal sense.⁶⁵ He remained influenced by those texts he had read and even by his earlier practice, but there were other motivations behind the composition of the diary.

Perhaps Jeake's motivations to record his life sprang from his 'proclivity to compile lists and to arrange things neatly', that the diary is 'almost an extension of his business records'.⁶⁶ This is quite likely as Jeake kept meticulous accounts. But his

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, 98.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

clearest motivation, besides the recording of providences, was to investigate the astrological causes of accidents. The nature of this investigation is discussed below. Hunter and Gregory make it clear that the astrological content juxtaposed with the ‘eclectic mixture’ of other concerns is why this diary is so valuable.⁶⁷ It is a unique record of a curious and diligent man who had a multitude of interests. That diversity of interests and synthesis of his ideas and beliefs is what makes Jeake’s diary useful for this study, for reconstructing the subjective experience of personal providentialism. Providence is consistently invoked but it was not his sole concern because spiritual exercise was only one of Jeake’s motivations for writing. This means that we can see how an individual influenced by the learned behaviour of spiritual diary-keeping matched his spiritual concerns with other intellectual or ideological ends. The diary has the potential, then, to illustrate how the exercise of providentialism was synthesised with other facets of life in the late seventeenth century within self-writing.

This section has demonstrated that Samuel Jeake’s diary was an enterprise where memory was mobilized for a particular design. That design was deeply influenced by the spiritual diary but Jeake’s main goals were to observe providences and to use his experiences to study the relationship between the position of the stars and earthly events. The next section addresses the significance of Jeake’s astrological studies in his subjective experience of providentialism. It will also show that Jeake exercised a personal providentialism that synthesised complex ideas and feelings, thereby demonstrating how this individual adapted and made use of providence in an inherently subjective way.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, 19.

5.3. Jeake's Providentialism

Here it will be argued that Samuel Jeake was exercising personal providentialism in his 1694 diary. He did not hesitate to observe, account and remember providence working in the everyday events and accidents that he experienced and recorded. It will also be argued that the diary depicts Jeake's subjective experience of providentialism in two ways. First, it will be argued that Jeake focussed only on the deliverances or the smiling providences he received. This suggests a shift in the experience of providentialism because the focus was now on a benevolent god, rather than a wrathful one. This observation in turn suggests that individuals like Jeake were adapting their exercise and making use of providence in highly subjective ways. This argument is furthered by the second element of Jeake's providentialism: his synthesis of astrological and providential ideas. Finally, throughout the section it will be argued that Jeake's interpretation that providence was working for his physical and material benefit instilled in him a confidence in God's benevolent care, which again gives a sense of the subjective nature of this explanatory system. To present these arguments the section will characterise Jeake's providentialism, particularly his focus on smiling providences and how his astrological ideas interacted with providence. Discussion will then move into how Jeake applied his providential-astrological system to his experience of environment, and then to his commercial interests.

At first glance, Jeake's providentialism seems typical of seventeenth-century personal accounts because he invoked providence through recognisable phrases. As explained in previous chapters, providentialism is usually denoted by habitual invocations and phrases, such as 'thanks be to God' or 'by God's mercy', and is applied to entries relating good or bad fortune, or encounters with a potentially dangerous environment, such as travelling or battling illness. Examples of this typical

invocation include Jeake's entry for 11 October 1683, when he remarked that 'through the good hand of God safely arrived after this solitary & troublesome journey' from Woodsgate to London.⁶⁸ This instance, where Jeake exercised his providentialism by observing, accounting, and remembering this mercy, does not appear that remarkable. Indeed, Hunter and Gregory describe his invocations as 'almost formulaic', acting as 'a guard against forgetfulness and ingratitude'.⁶⁹ But, as we have seen, it is the application of such invocations which exposes the subjective utility of providence for the writer, rather than its expression alone.

Jeake's providentialism in this diary is actually rather unusual, particularly when compared to his contemporary Robert Meeke. Hunter and Gregory describe his application of providence as 'strangely limited' because Jeake tends to characterise providence as 'almost invariably benevolent'.⁷⁰ They have a point; Jeake very clearly observed, accounted and remembered smiling providences that were emblematic of a benevolent God, while he omitted providential dispensations and afflictions. The absence of providential punishment is notable in his account of, for example, the fatal illness of his son Manasseh in July 1690, where he makes no reference to providence nor even to God.⁷¹ In an account of his father's death in the same year Jeake refers only to his father's observations of providence, that in all the months languishing under sickness his father 'never had the least murmuring expression against the Conduct of Providence towards him', and that when Samuel feared losing him he would answer, 'What God will: and that with a vigour in the Expression'.⁷² Jeake made

⁶⁸ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 166.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 205-6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 207.

no providential observations of his own in this account, nor does he appear to have derived any providential meaning from these bereavements.

By comparison, we can look at the reaction of Ralph Josselin (Jeake's father's generation) to the death of his ten-day-old son in February 1648. In the days following the boy's death Josselin considered how 'my god shall make mee see this dealing of his to bee for the best'. He sought to understand God's aim in sending this 'correction of his upon mee', and that 'when I had seriously considered my heart, and wayes, and compared them with the affliction' he arrived at the conclusion that it was the 'unseasonable playing at chesse' and 'much vanitie in my thoughts' that provoked God to have 'taken away a sonne'.⁷³ Josselin interpreted the loss of his son as a providential affliction, a signal from God directing him to examine himself, his behaviour and heart, and to improve upon the example providence had sent him. None of this self-dissection appears in Jeake's account of the death of Manasseh – at least, not in his 1694 diary.

Another comparison can be made with Thoresby, a diarist of Jeake's own generation.⁷⁴ Thoresby writes about his father's death (27 October 1679) after leaving five blank pages – a week's worth of daily entries – in an account on 5 November. He records attending a sermon for the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, though he writes that remembrance of national mercies was 'all imbittered by my Personal Affliction, [tha]t amazing stroke, [tha]t heavy dis=pensation w[hi]ch even presses me down to [th]e very pitt'. The death of his father leads Thoresby to plead for the 'help of an Omni=potent God' in order to be humbled 'for those particular sins [tha]t have been so displeasing to thee', 'for my heinous Provocations [tha]t have procured such

⁷³ Alan MacFarlane (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (Oxford, 1976), 114.

⁷⁴ Thoresby was a member of the Leeds Presbyterian community until the 1690s when he conformed. See Peter Meredith (ed.), *The Thoresby Society's Ducatus Tercentenary*, 2 vols. (Leeds, 2015), ii, 3-22.

... lamentable afflictions [tha]t have laid my greatest superlatively Greatest comfort in the dust'.⁷⁵

Thoresby's account of the death of his father, like Josselin's account of the death of his son, shows how the loss of a treasured family member often elicited a search for those sins that might have provoked affliction and punishment. This was also Meeke's reaction after the fire in his nephew's house, where his father had been born. Such a reaction correlates with a providentialism where 'smiling providences' were weighed against 'frowning providences', where providence moved between the poles of punishment and mercy, sin and reward. Part of the exercise of such a providentialism was to look for 'smiling providences', but to await afflictions with forbearance. For example, in 1663 Roger Lowe wrote of being 'somewhat grieved in mind by reason I saw not those smileing providences of God, as others have. But it's good to waite on God'.⁷⁶ In 1693 Elizabeth Bury wrote that while she was 'Still indulg'd by smiling Providences', she begged that her 'corrupt Nature may not turn Mercies to my Bane, or abuse the tender Love of GOD to his Dishonour'.⁷⁷ Like Josselin, Thoresby and Meeke, Lowe and Bury both exercised a providentialism that recognised the dialogue between smiling and frowning providences, between punishment and mercy, sin and reward.

It should be recognised that Jeake's diary differs in composition from the accounts of those writers, which were sequential diaries. Even still, for Jeake to make no acknowledgement of providence in the deaths of his son and father marks his

⁷⁵ Underlined words appear as in the manuscript diary. YAS, MS 21, 'Diary of Ralph Thoresby', 72-77. See also an abbreviated version of this account in Joseph Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S., Author of the Topography of Leeds (1677-1724)*, 2 vols. (London, 1830), i, 32; and on the anniversary of Thoresby's father's death which reiterates this providential interpretation at 71.

⁷⁶ William L. Sachse (ed.), *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-1674* (London, 1938), 36.

⁷⁷ Samuel Bury, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Elizabeth Bury* (1720), 130.

providentialism as distinctive and surprising when we consider that his writing was influenced by puritan autobiographies. Jeake presented himself in the diary as in receipt of only, as he put it, the smiles of ‘happy providence’.⁷⁸ This selection was part of his design, meaning that he was shaping himself as a creature under God’s providential care and exercising a providentialism that inspired confidence in that care.

Moreover, Jeake’s distinctive focus on smiling providences and on God’s benevolent care fits with a theory that several historians of providence have mentioned. This states that in this period there was a shift in how God was characterised, from a wrathful God of the Old Testament ‘in favour of a more benevolent view of the deity’.⁷⁹ This shift was reflected in national providentialism, as denoted in Coffey’s statement that ‘the emotional dynamics of Britain’s relationship with God changed’ in the eighteenth century, and where once ‘the face of Providence had once glowered ... it [now] smiled’.⁸⁰ This statement also describes Jeake’s focus on smiling providences. Walsham has made a similar observation, that God became ‘less vengeful’ in this period, less punitive and more benevolent, and that where before God had used the ‘school of adversity’ to correct his creatures, he set ‘aside medicines for the soothing balm of material well-being’.⁸¹ This re-characterisation is consistent with the rejection of original sin and of the moves by Restoration Anglicans to reconfigure the parameters of providence.⁸²

⁷⁸ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 199.

⁷⁹ David Harley, ‘Spiritual Physic, Providence and English Medicine, 1560-1640’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London, 1993), 112.

⁸⁰ John Coffey, ‘“Tremble Britannia!”: Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758-1807’, *EHR* (2012), 881.

⁸¹ Alexandra Walsham, ‘The Happiness of Suffering: Adversity, Providence, and Agency in Early Modern England’, in M. J. Braddick and J. Innes (eds.), *Suffering and Happiness in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016), 62.

⁸² Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD, 1996), 138-49; Michael Heyd, ‘Changing Emotions? The Decline of Original Sin On the Eve of the Enlightenment’, in Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills (eds.), *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (Aldershot, 2005), 124. See

Jeake's diary therefore suggests a shift from the providentialism typical of the spiritual diary – such as that practiced by Meeke – towards a re-shaped, re-moulded, re-configured providentialism that reflected a re-drawn divine countenance. While we should acknowledge that Jeake may have recorded providential dispensations and afflictions elsewhere, this finding is significant. It demonstrates how providence was malleable. And that malleability – or its subjective nature – was allowing it to be adapted by individuals into an ever-more useful instrument.

The other aspect of Jeake's providentialism that supports this argument is his synthesis of providential and astrological ideas. To understand this synthesis, it is necessary to explain the nature of Jeake's astrological observations. Below is a summary of the explanatory framework that Jeake was studying, and how he applied it in the diary alongside and within his exercise of providentialism.

Astrology, with its principles, technologies and practices, was a vital ideology held by many practitioners and their clients during the early modern period. Since the publication of Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, historians have recognised astrologers not as marginal or bizarre figures in early modern society, but as playing a 'central – if controversial' role in the period's social and intellectual history.⁸³ The practice of astrology centred on the principle that immutable celestial bodies ruled over earthly bodies in the 'sublunary sphere where all was mortality and change'. The stars had specific qualities and their movements affected the sublunary

also, Michael Heyd, 'Original Sin, the Struggle for Stability, and the Rise of Moral Individualism in Late Seventeenth-Century England', in Philip Benedict and Myron P. Gutmann (eds.), *Early Modern Europe: From Crisis to Stability* (Newark, 2005), 197-233.

⁸³ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971; 1991), chs. 10-12. Michael MacDonald, 'The Career of Astrological Medicine in England', in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 62. For a brief survey of the historiography of astrology see Mark S. Dawson, 'Astrology and Human Variation in Early Modern England', *HJ*, 56, 1 (2013), 31-33.

sphere in specific ways, such as their influence over the four elements which in turn determined the state of the four correlating ‘physiological qualities’, heat, cold, dryness, moisture.⁸⁴ To measure this effect an astrologer could map the configuration of the stars in a horoscope.⁸⁵ Doing so might allow the astrologer to make general predictions, draw nativities (a map of the sky at the moment of their client’s birth), judge elections (judging the opportune astrological moment to pursue action), and answer horary questions (looking to the heavens for solutions at the time of asking).⁸⁶ All sorts of people in English society might consult a practitioner for these services, particularly when making important decisions, or for medical reasons when the practitioner would make clinical assessments and then follow them with analysis of astrological figures.⁸⁷ As a consequence, astrological practice needed to conform to a ‘systematic approach’ to diagnosis and problem-solving, and as a discipline it required a meticulous eye for detail, erudition, excellent mathematical skills and patient study.⁸⁸

Astrology generated controversy, however. Making elections was particularly problematic because it was a form of prediction which potentially countered Christian teachings on prophecy and moral autonomy.⁸⁹ Many of Jeake’s contemporaries, particularly those from nonconformist circles, would have been familiar with arguments that to ‘gauge what would happen was to gainsay God’ and that only divine providence would determine the course of events.⁹⁰ John Rastrick, for example, reflected ruefully on the errors of his youth when he was ‘a great Observer of Signs’,

⁸⁴ Thomas, *Religion*, 337.

⁸⁵ Dawson, ‘Astrology’, 37.

⁸⁶ Thomas, *Religion*, 339.

⁸⁷ MacDonald, ‘Astrological Medicine’, 65-6. For further analysis of astrology and medicine see Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979), 204-14; Allan Chapman, ‘Astrological Medicine, in Charles Webster (ed.), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), 275-300.

⁸⁸ MacDonald, ‘Astrological Medicine’, 67.

⁸⁹ Thomas, *Religion*, 430.

⁹⁰ Dawson, ‘Astrology’, 37-8.

but that God fortunately ‘extricated’ him from these ‘Snares’, these ‘heathenish, diabolical and Astrological whimsys and fancys’.⁹¹

Despite this conflict, many practitioners and clients took astrology ‘very seriously’. To circumvent those theological questions some argued that God could use the heavens as secondary causes to achieve his ends.⁹² By the end of the seventeenth century, however, educated belief in astrology had declined. New astronomical observations, such as Tycho Brahe’s and Edmond Halley’s arguments about comets, had demonstrated that the heavens were to subject to change, which meant that the ‘old dichotomy between things sublunary and things celestial’ became ‘untenable’.⁹³ While astrology retained some popularity amongst men engaged in the new science ultimately these figures were ‘succeeded by unbelievers’. ‘Astrology had lost its scientific prestige’, meaning that the explanatory framework ‘collapsed’.⁹⁴

Before its terminal decline, in the period c.1665-95 when Jeake was engaging with astrology, there was a concerted effort to reform astrology. Following the Restoration there was a need to divest astrology of its enthusiastic, superstitious and magical overtones to prevent it from becoming the ‘property of credulous plebs’.⁹⁵ To this end progressive astrologers such as John Goad and John Gadbury utilised Baconian principles of observation, experiment and correlation to restore credibility to

⁹¹ Andrew Cambers (ed.), *The Life of John Rastrick, 1650-1727* (Camden 5th ser., xxxvi, London, 2010), 49.

⁹² Thomas, *Religion*, 427-8, 382.

⁹³ Thomas, *Religion*, 415. On the decline of astrology see also S. J. Tester, *A History of Western Astrology* (Woodbridge, 1987), chapter 6.

⁹⁴ See Capp, *Astrology*, 278, and Peter Wright, ‘Astrology and in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Social Studies of Science*, 5 (1975), 399-422, cited in Michael Hunter, ‘Science and Astrology in Seventeenth-Century England: An Unpublished Polemic by John Flamsteed’, in P. Curry (ed.), *Astrology, Science and Society: Historical Essays* (Woodbridge, 1987), 261; Tester, *Western Astrology*, 229; Thomas, *Religion*, 418. See Simon Schaffer’s argument against Thomas’s assertion that the Newtonian system would not allow for celestial influences in Simon Schaffer, ‘Newton’s Comets and the Transformation of Astrology’, in Curry (ed.), *Astrology*, 219-243, at 219.

⁹⁵ Patrick Curry, ‘Saving Astrology in Restoration England: ‘Whig’ and ‘Tory’ Reforms’, in Curry (ed.), *Astrology*, 245-6; Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1989), cited in Dawson, ‘Astrology’, 33.

astrological investigation, as demonstrated in Goad's examination of the astrological significance of weather in his *Astro-Meteorologica* (1686).⁹⁶

The scientific or rationalistic attempt to reform astrology is the most direct context for Jeake's astrological interests and practice. His diary, seen alongside his *Astrological Experiments Exemplified*, suggests that he shared in the 'passion for quantification and correlation' of Baconian ideology and that by 'careful empiricism' he aspired to develop an 'exact, non-magical astrological science'.⁹⁷ Jeake shared with his contemporary astrologers and natural philosophers the desire to 'reduce things to order', and this desire was complemented by his predilection for meticulous recording and study.⁹⁸ He lists having read many works of astrology, including those by reforming astrologers such as Goad.⁹⁹

Jeake writes that he 'began to learn Astrology' in July 1667 and by the early 1670s his study had begun in earnest.¹⁰⁰ He wrote an explanation of astrological principles called *Diapson. The Harmony of the Signes of Heaven* in 1671-2 in which he defended making elections against the accusations of it being 'illicite Magick', a defence that exposes his concern over astrology's magical and controversial overtones and his determination to portray it in rationalistic terms.¹⁰¹ Jeake then wrote *Astrological Excercitations* in 1675, a technical piece about the analysis of horoscopes. By this time Jeake had begun his weather diary which was completed with horoscopes to correlate weather with the position of the stars.¹⁰² During the 1670s Jeake had also

⁹⁶ Thomas, *Religion*, 387-8.

⁹⁷ Curry, 'Saving Astrology', 250; Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 14-15.

⁹⁸ Thomas, *Religion*, 388.

⁹⁹ Curry, 'Saving Astrology', 248-9; Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 15-16, 229.

¹⁰⁰ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 92.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰² An exercise not dissimilar to John Goad's *Astro-Meteorologica* (1686), cited in Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 15-6, 229.

engaged in a broader project of drawing the natal horoscopes of 152 people from Rye as an experiment, but he then turned his investigation on himself. The late 1670s and 1680s signalled a hiatus in Jeake's astrological writings and instead he 'set about a much more unusual programme of astrological enquiry, of which the diary forms a part'.¹⁰³

Jeake's astrological observations in the 1694 diary mostly relate to unusual circumstances, particularly accidents, which were a preoccupation of astrologers.¹⁰⁴ These could be illnesses, mishaps and falls, or narrowly-avoided injuries. For example, Jeake writes of developing a 'very bad & irregular' fever in July 1678. He states that 'it's consequents' lasted several months, he describes the basic symptoms, and then draws a horoscope. He then concludes that when 'Saturn or Mars are upon the Cusp of some Angle' they can be responsible for 'violent falls or suddain & unthought of Accidents'.¹⁰⁵

Jeake was not alone in writing horoscopes into his first-person narrative. For example, James Yonge noted his nativity in a journal which he described as a 'regular and exact narrative of the memorable accidents of my life'.¹⁰⁶ The difference in Yonge's case, however, is that the natal horoscope and adjoining interpretation had been drawn in 1678 by his friend and neighbour, the Plymouth astrologer Jerome Roche. The 'astrological judgement' in the diary was a copy made by a client, not an astrologer.¹⁰⁷ Jeake's diary is therefore remarkable because it is a transcript of an

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁰⁶ F. N. L. Poynter (ed.), *The Journal of James Yonge, Plymouth Surgeon [1647-1721]* (London, 1963), 17.

¹⁰⁷ Horoscope: *Ibid.*, 18-20.

astrologer's own practice, interwoven with other personal, business, and spiritual concerns.

What this short account of Jeake's astrological practice has shown is that his 1694 diary was clearly designed to facilitate his study of astrology. It belongs to a larger body of work in which Jeake investigated the heavens and experimented with source material, intent on developing an astrological science. What is important for this study, however, is how Jeake's astrological practices interacted with his providentialism. The first finding the diary yields is that the events in which Jeake acknowledges the role of providence – such as accidents – are often those which provide material for an astrological observation. This means that Jeake's exercise of providentialism operated alongside his adherence to astrological principles. Astrology therefore featured in Jeake's exercise of providentialism in this diary. This is provocative because, as Thomas observes, astrology itself 'offered a systematic scheme of explanation for all the vagaries of human and natural behaviour'.¹⁰⁸ In other words, astrology was itself an explanatory framework capable of accommodating all occurrences just as providence could. Like providence, interpretation of the correlation between the heavenly and earthly bodies was subjective, though guided by principles and conditions.¹⁰⁹ The diary therefore presents evidence of synthesis not contradiction between these systems of explanation.

Jeake's complementary application of providential and astrological ideas provides unusual access to the juxtaposition of these concepts in the late seventeenth century. To put the contrast between these ideas into context a more detailed explanation is needed regarding the shift in educated attitudes towards providence in the mid-late

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, *Religion*, 383.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 403.

seventeenth century. By the time Jeake was writing the diary in 1694 the picture of acceptable providentialism had changed due to the reconfiguration initiated by figures such as Thomas Sprat and John Tillotson in the late 1650s and during the Restoration.¹¹⁰ In this project beliefs in special providence were rejected in favour of a rational subscription to naturalistic general providence, which signalled a move away from observing God's direct interventions in individual.¹¹¹ As Winship argues, those who discerned special providence in their lives were marginalized or became unfashionable, as it was more acceptable to see God as the 'architect and supervisor of the cosmos' and providence as working through natural causes.¹¹²

According to this narrative, those who wanted to associate themselves with the fashionable scientific circles of the Royal Society – as Jeake did – were supposedly pursuing a model of providence far removed from the providentialism of early seventeenth-century England. From his list of books we know that Jeake had engaged with works that rejected special providence in favour of this more naturalistic general providence, such as Sprat's 'energetic propaganda' for the new philosophy, his *History of the Royal Society* (1667).¹¹³ Sprat advanced a model of providence that emphasised the regularity of nature: 'It is enough for the honor of his *Government*, that he guides the whole Creation ... by his known, and standing Laws'.¹¹⁴ In his

¹¹⁰ John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation 1603-1714* (Harlow, 2006), 147, 203-5. On Tillotson's works and theology see Winship, 44-50.

¹¹¹ Winship, *Seers*, 29, 3, and see his discussion of Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* (1665) at 38, 46-7.

¹¹² John Spurr, "'Virtue, Religion and Government': The Anglican Uses of Providence", in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), 31; Thomas, *Religion*, 765.

¹¹³ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 200; Simon Schaffer, 'Regeneration: The Body of Natural Philosophers in Restoration England', in Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin (eds.), *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (London, 1998), 104.

¹¹⁴ Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, 360, quoted in Winship, *Seers*, 38. See also, Michael Hunter, *The Image of Restoration Science: The Frontispiece to Thomas Sprat's History of the Royal Society (1667)* (Abingdon, 2017), 3; Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England* (Cambridge, 1981), 30-1.

astrological investigations Jeake shared Sprat's desire to observe regularity in nature and to find the laws of celestial influence. His methods, inspired by other rationalistic astrologers such as Goad and Gadbury, were also in line with the new philosophy. Like these figures he would have agreed that the scientist 'has always before his eyes the *beauty, contrivance, and order of Gods Works*'.¹¹⁵

Despite his subscription to the principles of the new philosophy and his ambitions to develop an astrological science, Jeake's providentialism was clearly personal and he invoked the kind of direct divine intervention associated with special providence. His subjective experience and exercise of providentialism was therefore a synthesis of contrasting ideas of naturalistic, rational religion with traditional providential ideas about God as the primary cause, capable of direct intervention.

An entry that highlights Jeake's adherence to ideas about particular providence is his account of walking at night in August 1693 towards his house, when he was 'in great danger of falling over a Load of wood' because he could not see it. However, 'it pleased God to send a Flash of that Lightning ... just at that very Instant: to shew me my danger & prevent it. Which wonderfull Providence I shall never decline to acknowledge'.¹¹⁶ Whilst he cites God's use of natural causes to achieve his preservation, Jeake clearly suggests the flash of lightning was divine agency – suggestive of special providence. More provocative is an account from April 1694 where we can see him balancing his desire to investigate natural causes with his observation of special providence. In the account Jeake records walking into a poorly lit brewhouse, and falling into an empty tun. He writes that 'through God's wonderful Providence I had no hurt', that he narrowly avoided breaking a leg or an arm, or

¹¹⁵ See Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, 28, 37, 374, 349, quoted in Hunter, *Science and Society*, 30.

¹¹⁶ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 224.

breaking his brains against the side of the tun, ‘for which great Providence I desire to be for ever thankfull’. After drawing a horoscope he then writes,

Wherein note that Mars is just risen, & Venus culminating. The former according to the Providential disposing of secondary Causes seeming to signify the fall; & the latter the escaping without hurt. Nor does this Consideration diminish the Glory of the God of Nature in the admirably miraculous Textures of his Providential dispositions: which when I contemplate, it makes me cry out, as related in the Prophecy of Exekiel. Chap 10.13 O Wheel: that is O wonderful Providence.¹¹⁷

This excerpt is significant. It exposes Jeake sketching out how his providential-astrological system worked, but also suggests how wary he was of denying God as the primary cause and His employment of special providences. It shows that his desire to investigate astrology, to explore natural laws and God’s work within them did not prohibit his belief in special providence nor his exercise of personal providentialism. What this finding suggests is that Jeake’s diary provides us with a compelling portrait of the subjective experience of providentialism adjusting to shifting ideological and intellectual conditions.

This third section has so far found that Jeake was exercising personal providentialism in his 1694 diary. A notable characteristic of his subjective experience of providentialism is that he selected for remembrance only the deliverances and smiling providences that denoted God’s benevolent care. This is markedly different from his contemporary Meeke and indicates an area of change in the experience of providentialism. That selection also highlights the malleability of providence, a malleability reflected also in his unique synthesis of providential and astrological ideas. Jeake was able to adapt providence and continue using it even as his intellectual setting placed restrictions on the idea.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 236-7.

This chapter concludes with an examination of how Jeake applied providence to the events he related in his diary and what this exercise meant to him. It will be argued in the following discussion of Jeake's experiences of his environment and his commercial interests that his exercise of providentialism instilled in him a confidence in God's providential care over him, a confidence that armed him against uncertainty and risk and that again denoted a benevolent God.¹¹⁸ Because Jeake's writing was an enterprise, a mobilization of memory in the service of present and future living, it will be argued that this confidence was as much about his writing self as about his written self. His providentialism and the mode of feeling it engendered shaped how this writer perceived himself within his world.

The first subject area examined here concerns Jeake's invocations of providence in accounts relating his experiences of the environment, such as illnesses, accidents and injuries. Jeake did not present himself in the diary as a figure of robust health, and he makes this self-portrait clear in detailed descriptions of his person. He described his stature at the age of sixteen, being '5 feet 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ Inches', when '*my beard began to appear*', and when a 'violent Cholerick humour' caused the 'breaking out in pimples upon my Nose, & Face, from which never totally free after'.¹¹⁹ Of his nineteen-year-old self, he then wrote,

My stature was short ... My Complexion Melancholy, My Face pale & lean, Forehead high; Eyes grey, Nose large, Teeth bad & distorted, No. 28. [sic.] Hair of a sad brown, & curling: about this age & till after 20 had a great quantity of it; but from thence it decayed & grew thin. My voice grew hoarse after I had the small pocks. My Body was always lean, my hands & feet small, I was partly left handed & partly Ambodexter. In my right hand was found the

¹¹⁸ On the distinction between confidence and assurance see Kate Narveson, 'Resting Assured in Puritan Piety: The Lay Experience', in Alec Ryrie and T. Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke 2016), 166-192.

¹¹⁹ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 100.

perfect Triangle composed of the Vital, Cephalick, & Hepatick Lines, all entire; but the Cephalia broken in my left hand.¹²⁰

By describing himself thus Jeake provided his reader with a sense of his physical appearance, and of how he perceived himself. His description of a melancholy complexion is typical of humoral understandings of physiology whereby temperament was identifiable by complexion, determined by the balance of the humours.¹²¹ The predisposition of an individual to a particular humour fell under the influence of the stars because, as John Gadbury explained, ‘the Stars are the remote causes’ of the differences between peoples, because despite their being ‘made of one Blood’, such blood ‘is not equally fermented in all Persons’.¹²² The complexion held the key for explaining physical and mental capacities and ‘behavioural propensities’.¹²³ Jeake’s unsympathetic and detailed appraisal of his appearance is therefore a striking self-portrait because in analysing his complexion, stature, and his palms he provided the reader with a clinical assessment of his appearance, and also of his temperament and personality.¹²⁴

Jeake’s candour continues in accounts of illness and pain. It is in these accounts that he observes, accounts and remembers the mercy of providence, characteristic of his emphasis on smiling providences. For example, he writes of being plagued by ‘a Cancerous humor’ in his mouth in 1694 which had ‘eaten away part of the Gum’, ‘but it pleased God somewhat to assuage the pain in 3 or 4 days’.¹²⁵ Providence smiled on his recovery. He also writes that his illnesses could take on a physical, emotional and mental character; melancholy was a state that he writes lasted for at least ten years

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹²¹ Dawson, ‘Astrology’, 33.

¹²² John Gadbury, *Ephemeris* (1668), sig. D3r, quoted in Dawson, ‘Astrology’, 34.

¹²³ Dawson, ‘Astrology’, 39-40.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹²⁵ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 250.

from 1667.¹²⁶ It struck him once again in 1680 ‘being perhaps the most violent I ever were afflicted with’, causing great distress and conflict between he and the Hartshornes. Providence happily intervened:

But in the beginning of November it pleased God, out of his abundant mercy to chear & raise my spirit without any known occasion; but as the seed sown springeth up we know not how. Even so the mercifull God day after day made my spirit chearfull & lively. So that by degrees I recovered easily my repute again with them.¹²⁷

Not only did providence recover him from mental and physical suffering but it also effectively recovered his relationships with the Hartshornes, the family he had selected to join and in whose house he now lived. With regards to his bodily health we can therefore see Jeake narrating the work providence did for his physical, emotional, and familial benefit.

Jeake most consistently invoked providence when reporting accidents or narrowly-avoided injuries. This is not unusual for a diary of this period and Jeake employed recognisable providential language in these entries. But his routine-like reportage of God’s favour and his selection of only deliverances not punishments deepens the impression that he perceived providence as working for his good, watching over him, ensuring his safety.

In January 1699 he writes of walking towards London bridge and being pushed to the ‘Eastside close to the stonewall’ where a cart passed him ‘so nigh to the wall, that I had scarce room left to stand between; if I had not providentially lift up my Foot, & stept into a puddle of mud I believe the Cart had run over & broke it’.¹²⁸ As this entry suggests, some of Jeake’s accidents warrant an acknowledgment of providence that is

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 153-4.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

barely more than a routine-like nod. But even the more serious accidents have this routine or domestic quality to them, such as the entry relating his fall from a bolting horse in August 1681 when the fall 'broke the Combs in my pocket & squeesd a Copper tobacco box flat, yet through God's providence I had no hurt at all'.¹²⁹

Jeake implies that providence has been close to him, smiling on him, keeping him and his household safe. This picture is reinforced in his account of a house fire in April 1686 where providence was watching over the sleeping inhabitants in his home. A maid-servant had fallen asleep in the kitchen, leaving a candle burning near a linen shelf 'when by God's Providence my Mother in law smelling burnt Linen as she lay in her bed, arose & came down; thereby preventing the maid & the house from being burnt'.¹³⁰ The catalogue of these deliverances, accounts of God preserving his physical safety and watching over him in a dangerous environment one after another, reveals a clear and steady air of confidence emerging in Jeake's observing, accounting and remembering.

Jeake's acknowledgement of providence in these kind of accounts is often accompanied by a horoscope. The exercise of these two explanatory systems reinforced Jeake's quiet and considered confidence. In a lengthy entry for 16 June 1670 Jeake describes stepping into a dark room at night and, not realising that part of the floor had collapsed, he fell into a flooded cellar. He acknowledges that 'through the good Providence of God, [he] did neither fall into the Well, nor dash my head against the Cellar Walls, though neer both: so that I had not the lest hurt'.¹³¹ He makes the potential risk clear, which highlights the protective power of the providence that shielded him from that risk. He then draws a horoscope of the time of the accident and

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

observes the positions of the stars and their correlation with these circumstances. He had thus surveyed the risk, observed, accounted and remembered the benevolent care of God in preserving him, and then ordered the event in his mind by determining its astrological cause.

His astrological interpretations are often much shorter but the effect seems to be much the same; he records the accident, observes his deliverance, which he then reinforces by emphasising the danger he faced before quantifying and qualifying his position in that dangerous environment through astrological calculation. For example, when he was accidentally struck on the eyebrow by a friend's staff in 1672 he declares that 'it was a great Providence the stroke did not light full in my Eye', and then notes briefly the positions of Mars in relation to other bodies at the time of the incident.¹³²

As this last example suggests, some of the accidents Jeake records do not seem all that serious and are at risk of appearing trivial. This is a characteristic of Jeake's providentialism that should not be overlooked. Jeake perceived God working for his good, which meant observing, accounting and remembering deliverances from all harms, big or small, real or imagined. Hunter and Gregory remark that his invocations of providence in these near-accidents descend into a 'dwindling scale of seriousness which is almost comic'.¹³³ They have a point, as some of these accidents are no more than minor bumps and grazes, or are accidents that failed to materialise such as his nearly walking into a ladder in September 1672.¹³⁴ But to understand Jeake's subjective experience of providentialism requires taking him on his own terms. This means looking at the trivial and the serious because it was Jeake's perception of uncertainty and risk that initiated his exercise of providentialism in this diary. For

¹³² *Ibid.*, 124.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

example, in January 1686 Jeake reports going out of his garret in low light, and slipping from the floor down onto the uppermost stair ‘without any staggering or stumbling’. This slip was enough for him acknowledge it as a ‘merciful providence’, and to imagine that his head would most certainly have been ‘dasht against a great beam’ had he stumbled. The event elicited the drawing of a horoscope and an adjoining interpretation.¹³⁵ He perceived risk then exercised his providentialism and inquired as to the astrological conditions of the event.

Jeake does much the same in an account of riding with his daughter. She was unseated when riding pillion, but was fortunately tied to the saddle so could be lifted back into place while the horse stood still patiently, unharmed. Jeake writes that had the horse been ‘unruly’, however, and not quiet, ‘she had probably been trampled under his feet or otherwise mischief’d’. Of this accident Jeake reflects, ‘Which Providential preservation I desire to take notice of with thankfulness’. He completes the entry with a brief observation of the position of the heavens.¹³⁶ He records experiencing a similar accident himself when hanging off a saddle ‘it pleased God that the horse stood perfectly still when I lay under him; for if he had kept going as he did before though but 2 steps, he had trod either upon my belly, or my legs, & kill’d me or broke my limbs’. He then examines the astrological conditions to understand why these events occurred and completes the entry with the comment ‘Other Causes I find not’.¹³⁷

While these entries may not strike the reader as significant accidents, such as those resulting in serious injury, they do reveal something important about Jeake’s perception of himself within his environment. His acknowledgement of the injuries or

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 240-1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

fatalities that could have happened suggests that he was acutely aware of risks and uncertainties. But in this diary Jeake chose to observe how providence directly delivered him from these dangers, acknowledging God's smiling countenance. This demonstrates the exercise of personal providentialism by one who wished to counter risk and for whom that exercise instilled a sense of confidence in the care of a benevolent God.

This discussion of Jeake's application of providentialism to environmental events has shown that Jeake was an acutely self-aware individual, as demonstrated in his detailed self-portrait. He also perceived himself within an uncertain world. He accounted his interactions with his environment with meticulous care. Of the accidents that warranted acknowledgement of providence he followed a methodical exercise. He narrated the accident, observed, accounted and remembered the role of providence, emphasised God's mercy by imagining worse outcomes, and then quantified the natural circumstances of that accident through astrological observation. The effect of this exercise was the accumulation of a steady and considered feeling of confidence, a confidence in the providential care and preservation that he received in the face of uncertainty and risk. Such a subtle feeling is not a pronounced emotion but it is not insignificant when we consider that in another area of his life Jeake embraced uncertainty and risk. It is to this area, to his commercial and financial interests, that discussion will now turn.

Jeake's commercial and financial interests are another important theme of his 1694 diary and in entries detailing his transactions with other traders, customers and later his financial speculations we can see him observing, accounting and remembering the work of providence. These invocations of providence are consistent with Jeake's exercise of personal providentialism, his tendency to acknowledge only

deliverances and smiling providences, and his employment of both providential and astrological ideas. These entries also deepen the impression that his providentialism instilled in him a confidence in a benevolent, smiling providence that allowed him to counter uncertainty and risk, assuage his doubts, and pursue material prosperity.

The frequency of entries detailing his commercial activities reflects Jeake's predilection for meticulous accounting. Hunter and Gregory suggest that he transferred information from his accounts into the diary, such as the loose sheets that still exist from the 1670s and a ledger from the 1680s. These accounts contain careful cross-references between expenses, profits, stock, and cash, and they are complemented by business correspondence including credit transactions.¹³⁸ The content in the diary is only a small part of Jeake's personal accounting but it does show how far his commercial and financial enterprise commanded his time and attention, and how much he was risking in pursuing a career in which so many fell victim to bankruptcy.¹³⁹ He does not appear to have entered into new ventures without laboriously considering his options and his diary paints a picture of his steadily expanding enterprise. What is important for this study is how providence featured in that picture, how he applied his providentialism to this area of his life, and the utility of that exercise.

We can compare Jeake's invocation of providence in commercial or professional affairs to other diarists of the time. As stated above, Rokeby considered his selection for the Court of Common Pleas as the 'voice of Providence calling me up', and Newton considered it a 'diuine appointment that I was chose' to be an Alderman.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 59.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴⁰ J. Raine (ed.), *A Brief Memoir of Mr Justice Rokeby* (Surtees Soc. xxxvii, Durham, 1861), 32-33; J. E. Foster (ed.), *The Diary of Samuel Newton Alderman of Cambridge (1662-1717)* (Cambridge, 1890), 28-29.

Fortune could swing both ways, however, and disappointments were also attributable to the workings of providence. Joseph Williams noted in 1725 that ‘after many years of prosperity, it pleased God to exercise me with great losses this year, to almost the whole of my capital in trade’, but that the following year ‘God, my good and gracious Father, hath been pleased to appoint a merciful issue to my worldly losses, and to give me a year of considerable prosperity in trade’.¹⁴¹

It was not unusual for self-writers to observe the hand of providence in their material success and wellbeing because it was a commonly held belief throughout the early modern period that providence was the arbiter of success, social justice and order. Providence was responsible for abundance and prosperity and thus also for economic and social status.¹⁴² And as stated in chapter 1, it has been argued that these moralised understandings of economic life persisted in the late seventeenth century.¹⁴³ With exception to a ‘handful of later Stuart intellectuals’ belief in providential intervention in economic affairs continued in Jeake’s lifetime.¹⁴⁴

Jeake’s outlook confirms the role of providence in economic behaviour, though his practice is distinctive in its emphasis on smiling providences. Each step of his career was taken to attain financial security and he appears to have had no qualms in observing providence in dealings that increased his material prosperity, even if his profits came at others’ expense.¹⁴⁵ His choice of career was a logical move as he could make use of the regional nonconformist mercantile community, but he was also probably aware that ‘to be rich and to become poore or to be poore and become rich

¹⁴¹ B. Fawcett, *Extracts from the Diary, Meditations and Letters of Mr. Joseph Williams of Kidderminster, who died December 21, 1755, aged 63* (1779), 19, 31.

¹⁴² Jacob Viner, *The Role of Providence in the Social Order* (Philadelphia, 1972), 17, 87-91.

¹⁴³ Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012). See section 1.2., above.

¹⁴⁴ Waddell, *God, Duty*, 62-4.

¹⁴⁵ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 10-11.

[was] a matter inherent to a Merchant's estate'.¹⁴⁶ Pursuing this path meant that Jeake would face the uncertainties and risks of the exchange rate, unpredictable events and prohibitive legislation, not to mention the capricious nature of credit and debt. Jeake's exercise of providentialism in this area of life is perhaps not so surprising, as he would have needed to shield himself from those worries if he wanted to succeed. His diary exposes some of that exercise and these entries further the impression that his providentialism instilled in him a confidence in the benevolent care of providence, which would watch over his endeavours and guide him to success.

Some of Jeake's acknowledgments of providence in his trading ventures resemble the routine-like nod that we saw in his accounts of safe travel or recovery from illness. He might refer to cargo 'providentially' arriving safely into Rye harbour or that he would 'providentially escape' loss of income.¹⁴⁷ Other observations are more explicit, such as his reflection on an unsuccessful venture in July 1679. He had sent for goods from Rouen, despite the trade embargo with France in place since 1678, and could only sell them at a loss in England. Rather than seeing this as a providential dispensation he states that 'therefore I esteem my self happy, that the Providence of God always prevented me from being employed & engaged in the smuggling Factoryes: even when for want of due Consideration of the Temptations, I endeavoured to procure them'.¹⁴⁸ Providence was thus seen by Jeake as not only safely guiding his goods and helping him escape losses, but was also steering his career down a more profitable path.

¹⁴⁶ R. Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1995), 91, quoted in Anne L. Murphy, 'Dealing with Uncertainty: Managing Personal Investment in the Early English National Debt', *History*, 91, 302 (2006), 203.

¹⁴⁷ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 190, 137.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

In 1678, once Jeake had experienced the unpredictable nature of trade first-hand due to the embargo, he demonstrated his adaptability and began to lend money in his locality at interest.¹⁴⁹ His loans increased in 1679-80 to sums of £100 or more, paid at a standard rate of 6 per cent which was typical of the loans he made throughout his life. This was a successful venture though not without risk due to unreliable customers. From 1679 he began lending on 'bottomry', whereby a shipowner could borrow money against their ship for the period of a voyage. It was lucrative but again presented risk because the ship (the mortgage) might be wrecked, whereupon Jeake would lose his money.¹⁵⁰ But Jeake continued down this path, adding bills of exchange to his range of services. By 1680 he had expanded the commodities he traded which provided him with a more secure and diverse means of making profit. As cautious as Jeake was, necessity and success had encouraged a steady expansion in commodities and financial services.¹⁵¹

When detailing these developments Jeake often invoked providence. He noted its role in helping him adapt to circumstances, writing in an entry about a complex mortgage arrangement in December 1683 that 'Providence put ... it in my mind' to change direction and pursue a safer course of action.¹⁵² He often described fortuitous circumstances as 'providential' for him, such as in October 1683 when he secured £100 owed him despite the death of the client, just when he needed to flee Rye to escape arrest.¹⁵³ Pursuing these insecure debts was a routine part of Jeake's life and he regarded successful collections of money as smiling providences. In 1688 he recalled

¹⁴⁹ Murphy, 'Dealing with Uncertainty', 204. See also B. A. Holderness, 'Credit in English Rural Society before the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to the Period 1650-1720', *Agricultural History Review*, 24 (1976), 97-109, cited in Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 65.

¹⁵⁰ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 66.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 165.

that William Baker owed him £225 for wool, that he was very concerned over this as Baker was very ill, ‘but it pleased God that he recovered & lived to pay me all my money ... & soon after that he died, & his widow cheated most of the Creditors of their moneys’; he later describes this as ‘a happy Providence’.¹⁵⁴ Sometimes these cases caused him to be greatly ‘vexed and discontented’, especially when dealing with litigious customers who ‘scolded out [their] mind’ to him, protesting the terms of their bond or trust. In such incidents, however, Jeake continued to observe God ‘providentially’ sending him the right person to deal with or ‘meer Providence’ inspiring him with a solution.¹⁵⁵

It appears that by broadening his commercial ventures in this way Jeake had protected himself from unpredictable circumstances only to invite new troubles. Recalling loans, speculating on voyages, insuring clients’ credit; these were risky ventures. But what we can see in his diary is a habitual recognition of providence working to secure his position in these ventures, to secure his income and to guide circumstances in his favour. We cannot know what Jeake felt or observed in the moment of these events but writing in 1694, looking back and selecting those that met his design, Jeake could observe, account and remember the way that providence smiled on his ventures. Writing in 1694, then, we can see that Jeake’s providentialism allowed him to look at his ventures with a confidence in the benevolent providence that oversaw them.

Despite the persecution Jeake and his fellow Rye nonconformists faced in the early 1680s, by 1688 his fortunes were looking up. He was making substantial profits from overseas trade, mainly from lockrams, canvas and Normandy cloth, and from

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 190, 199.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

malt and deal bought from ships coming into Rye, together with the trade in wool and hops at home. The arrival of the Nine Years War then reversed these fortunes and while he could continue trading domestically, Jeake's most profitable trade of French goods came to an end and he had less cash to spend on commodities and to lend against bonds and mortgages.¹⁵⁶

Now in a difficult position, Jeake writes in April 1694 that 'about this time began to run in my mind, to venture & try to advance my Income, the war having spoiled all my Trade at Rye & I making but 5 per cent of my money at Interest upon Mortgages & Bonds, upon which I could barely maintain my family'.¹⁵⁷ That April he had visited his fellow merchant Thomas Miller in London who had informed him of the Million Adventure, a state lottery where 100,000 tickets were sold for £10 each in return for annuities and the chance to win more. His deliberations over entering the lottery were occurring not long before he began writing the diary in July 1694 – they must have been fresh in his mind. He writes, 'Looking upon it Providential that I should come at this time: for had I staid at Rye I believe I should have put none in, for want of being animated by the Example of the Londoners'.¹⁵⁸

Providence had put this opportunity in his path. After much deliberation of the moral implications of lotteries he writes, 'I was the better satisfied to be concerned in it; & after many deliberate Reflections ... I concluded this might be lawfull'.¹⁵⁹ After rounding up money from those who owed him, Jeake bought ten tickets and thus joined

¹⁵⁶ See further discussion of his decision-making in Murphy, 'Dealing with Uncertainty', 203-4; Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 69.

¹⁵⁷ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 233.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

the ranks of investors, small and large, in England's public debt.¹⁶⁰ The Million Adventure was a good start for a cautious, inexperienced investor such as Jeake, as it was less speculative than some of the investment opportunities that were available.¹⁶¹ But he would become bolder in the following months. He became one of the Bank of England's first subscribers, his stake growing from £200 to £500 which qualified him for a vote at the Bank's General Court.¹⁶² Then in July, pleased with his returns and 'after a long & Fluctuating Consultation in my own thoughts, being now wholly out of Cash', he resolved to purchase £400 of East India Company stock when the price was right.¹⁶³

Hunter and Gregory aptly describe the pages following this resolution as 'a cliff-hanging narrative' of Jeake deciding when to buy (as advised by Miller, who steered him successfully) and how to get hold of the money. Fortunately for Jeake, providence was smiling upon him. In September, 'at a great Nonplus to pay a bill of £45' and needing to send the money to Miller in London 'and having no Cash by me', by chance he met 'providentially' with acquaintances in the street who supplied with him bills of £40, £30, and £100, all without interest, thus allowing him to proceed with his investment. The next day he writes that he heard from Miller who had purchased the stock 'it being the very day wherein I had those unexpected supplies of money. So that Providence sent me the bills very opportunely'.¹⁶⁴ He sold the stock in November at a twelve per cent profit.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 234-5. See also Dickson, *Financial Revolution*; Murphy, 'Dealing with Uncertainty', 200-217; Anne L. Murphy, 'Lotteries in the 1690s: Investment or Gamble?' *Financial History Review*, 12, 2 (2005).

¹⁶¹ Murphy, 'Dealing with Uncertainty', 206.

¹⁶² Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 71. See Dickson, *Financial Revolution*, 39-76; H. V. Bowen, 'The Bank of England during the Long Eighteenth Century, 1694-1820', in Richard Roberts and David Kynaston (eds.), *The Bank of England: Money, Power and Influence 1694-1994* (Oxford, 1995), 1-18.

¹⁶³ Hunter and Gregory, *Diary*, 244.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 249.

This account of buying stock is a clear demonstration of how Jeake perceived providence as smiling upon his endeavours and its direct influence over his success. It exemplifies the findings of this last discussion; it demonstrates Jeake's exercise of personal providentialism and his selection of smiling providences, and it communicates the steady and considered confidence that Jeake drew from the knowledge – as he perceived it – that providence was working for his good. Granted, the workings of providence that he observed, accounted and remembered are less dramatic than the sudden flashes of lightning mentioned above, but the subjective utility of Jeake's providentialism remains the same: his providentialism instilled within him, and consolidated, a confidence in the benevolent care of providence.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Samuel Jeake's diary provides an insight into the life of a self-aware and conscientious merchant, and has shown him to be a pious, curious and materially-motivated individual who used his self-writing to exercise personal providentialism. It has found that his 1694 diary is an unusual and valuable source because the document is a specific design exhibiting a mixture of themes. While Jeake was influenced by the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping this design reflected something that was more serviceable to his intellectual and commercial interests. In it we can see Jeake 'at work', shaping and choosing those events and memories that suited this design, mobilizing his memory and reshaping his written self anew. Therefore, the providentialism exercised within its pages was about more than not forgetting the operations of providence, but a reflection of the utility of this belief at the time of writing.

It has argued that Jeake's subjective exercise of providentialism is marked by his focus on deliverances rather than the duality of providence. He observed, accounted and remembered smiling providences. This is significant because it correlates with what historians have identified as a changing characterisation of God from a frowning countenance to a smiling one. Here Jeake's diary is suggestive of a change in the experience of providentialism in this period. His diary also exposes a synthesis of providential and astrological ideas. His desire to investigate astrology according to the principles of the new rationalistic philosophy did not prohibit his exercise of personal providentialism: it complemented it. Jeake's diary therefore demonstrates how the subjectivity of providence allowed for its continuity amidst changing intellectual circumstances and how even as the concept was restricted by others, individuals could make use of it and find comfort within its parameters.

Furthermore, the way that Jeake wrote about environmental experiences and commercial ventures reveals that he perceived himself within a risk-ridden world. Despite these uncertainties he adapted to circumstances and took further risks in the knowledge that providence steered him, preserved him, and worked for his good. Jeake's providentialism therefore inspired confidence in the care of a benevolent providence, a distinctive mode of feeling that further affected how this individual perceived himself within his uncertain world.

The remainder of the thesis will build on the idea, established in this chapter, of a shift in the exercise of providentialism and the representation of God's involvement. Using the diary of Edmund Harrold, it will be argued that providentialism was exercised in pursuit of 'quiet contentment and satisfaction of mind' and was

characterised by a resignation to God's will.¹⁶⁶ As such it will advance further the argument that the malleability of this belief allowed individuals to adapt and mould providence into a compelling, useful and powerful instrument.

¹⁶⁶ Raine, *Justice Rokeby*, 19-20.

6. ‘Quiet Contentment and Satisfaction of Mind’: Resignation and Resolution in the Diary of Edmund Harrold

So far it has been argued that in the period *c.*1660-*c.*1720 personal providentialism was being enacted and exercised through self-writing in such a way that provoked distinct modes of feeling and informed perceptions of self. Chapter 2 established the relationship between self-writing and the exercise of providentialism, arguing that this creative act of memory allowed writers to observe, account and remember the workings of providence in their lives in such a way that reflected the subjectivity of their belief. In chapter 3 we saw in the remembrances of Elizabeth Freke that the elasticity of this mysterious idea could provoke and reinforce feelings of ambivalence about providence, and could create contradiction rather than clarity, which again highlights the subjectivity of providence. Chapter 4 presented a writer that pursued providence with rigour and who used a traditional spiritual diary for self-examination. Robert Meeke sought and anticipated signs of God’s special attention and hoped for affection that showed his improvement of those providences. That chapter demonstrated continuities in the experience of providentialism into this later period. Chapter 5, in contrast, showed how the spiritual diary was adapted to serve other interests and suggested a shifting focus of providentialism from God’s frowning countenance and onto his smiling providences; a shift that was consistent with

arguments that providence was reconfigured in the late seventeenth century to denote a more benevolent, less punitive God.

Overall, these chapters have illustrated that the subjectivity of providentialism allowed individuals to adapt providence, mould it in their self-writing, and make use of it even as circumstances changed. Chapter 6 will advance this argument further and will again suggest an area of change in the exercise of providentialism. In contrast to Meeke, who exhibited continuity and whose exercise of providentialism was a search for feeling, this case study is of someone who sought to relinquish feeling, to resign himself to God's will. The Manchester wigmaker and diarist Edmund Harrold exercised his belief to find stability and to help his battle against alcoholism. Harrold's diary suggests that he hoped for a balancing or resolution of self, and in recording his life he sought that balance by resigning himself over to God's will by submitting himself to the machinations of providence. As in earlier chapters, it will be argued that this writer's was a very personal form of providentialism and that his exercise involved feeling. The feeling wrought by Harrold's providentialism is subtle, even elusive, but can be described as a search for 'contentment' and 'satisfaction'.

According to recent scholarship, the pursuit of contentment suggests a change in providential belief in the late seventeenth century, wherein individuals observed providences in hope of reaching a state of contentment, rather than to improve on providences specifically sent by God. Supposedly, such practice was passive, characterised by submission and resignation. This argument, examined in section 6.1., is also consistent with the shift away from perceptions of a punitive, wrathful deity, and with the reconfigurations of providence initiated by Restoration Anglicans, as examined in chapter 1 and argued in chapter 5. It will be argued here that although Harrold's diary suggests movement towards mental resignation and a growing desire

to pursue contentment, this move did not require passivity on the part of the individual. In exercising his providentialism Harrold was actively trying to re-shape his life and his self-writing was a powerful site of personal agency used to that end. Thus, his example provides us with indications of a change in the experience of providentialism, mixed with continuities shared with his other diarists. His case study will be examined in sections 6.2. and 6.3., which provide social context, details of the diary and an account of the problem that Harrold was trying to resolve. Section 6.4. then examines how Harrold exercised and experienced providentialism before the chapter concludes in section 6.5.

6.1. Contentment and Satisfaction

It will be shown in the sections below that Harrold exercised providentialism to reach a state of satisfaction.¹ To achieve this he resigned himself to God's will and submitted to providence. This was a practice that we can see in contemporary diaries. For example, the quotation in this chapter's title is taken from Rokeby's writings, which featured in chapter 2. The phrase is from a letter to a grieving friend written in 1672, where he writes,

It is certain that God sees it best to deale thus with you, and the great spring of all true quiet contentment and satisfaction of mind is to resolve every thing into the righteous, just, and holy will of God ... my design herein is onely to contribute my poor help towards that calmness and sedateness of mind which I heartely wish and pray for in all occurrences of this life.²

¹ Satisfaction taken here to carry connotations of resolution and balancing, as well as its similarity to contentment. See 'Satisfy, v.', *OED*, <http://www.oed.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/Entry/171239?redirectedFrom=satisfy#eid> (accessed 11 January 2018).

² J. Raine (ed.), *A Brief Memoir of Mr Justice Rokeby* (Surtees Soc. xxxvii, Durham, 1861), 19-20.

Rokeby implies here that his grieving friend, in weathering this affliction, sought ‘quiet contentment and satisfaction of mind’ and that he ought to resolve or resign himself to God’s will in order to find that contentment. It is commonsensical to a modern reader that a grieving person would seek quiet relief and a balanced mind, and that a friend would try to give such comfort. But it should be remembered that suffering through adversity was thought to help the godly find assurance. To those operating in the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping afflictions should be specifically improved upon for precise correction, rather than being a path to one general ideal state of mind. The desired state of mental wellbeing implied in Rokeby’s letter is therefore suggestive of a change in providentialism in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Ann Thompson calls this a reconfiguration of the ‘art of suffering’. Earlier in the century, the art of suffering can be described as one where the ‘sufferer’ of afflictions would make ‘a profitable use of his affliction’. This is what can be seen in Meeke’s diary.³ He discerned an affliction, which he considered to be sent to him because he had sinned. He bore that affliction with patience and improved upon it to achieve correction of the provoking sin. The process was targeted because God sent ‘specific suffering towards specific individuals for the purpose of bringing about their salvation’.⁴ The desired end state of their improvements or observations could not be known until that reflection had taken place. Thompson argues, however, that from the 1640s this process, this ‘art of suffering’, was superseded by one which was designed to ‘attain a state of mind which the writer ha[d] already defined’: ‘typically

³ Ann Thompson, *The Art of Suffering and the Impact of Seventeenth-Century Anti-Providential Thought* (Aldershot, 2003), 58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

contentment, or silence, or resignation to the will of God'.⁵ The difference here is that the desired 'end state' was already in place regardless of the providence received. It was a general ideal state, not specific. Thompson argues, therefore, that this doctrine of contentment, as it was advanced by a new generation of mainly Anglican writers, was 'in harmony with divine non-intervention', passivity, and the encroachment of 'anti-providential thought'.⁶

Responding to Thompson's argument, Walsham has agreed that there was a 'slow drift away from the voluntaristic doctrine of actively improving affliction that had dominated during the late Elizabethan and early Stuart heyday of the 'art of suffering', towards a quieter resignation to the will of God'.⁷ She notes, however, that a 'residual cultural element' of the former practice remained amongst dissenters and that the shift was not attributable to 'anti-providentialist thought', but to the 'elasticity, energy, and agency that had always been inherent in providentialism'.⁸ Accordingly, this chapter will shed light on this area of change, and emphasise how the subjectivity of providential belief was instrumental in its adaptation by those individuals who still found use, value and comfort in it.

Furthermore, if providence was associated with a state of contentment rather than fear, then it follows that God had become 'less vengeful' and more benevolent.⁹ And within that idea of contentment there was even now a 'moral validation for material happiness'.¹⁰ The shift away from the earlier art of suffering was also consistent with

⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 106-7.

⁷ Alexandra Walsham, 'The Happiness of Suffering: Adversity, Providence, and Agency in Early Modern England', in M. J. Braddick and J. Innes (eds.), *Suffering and Happiness in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016), 59

⁸ *Ibid.*, 59

⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰ Craig Muldrew, 'Happiness and the Theology of the Self in Late Seventeenth-Century England', in Braddick and Innes (eds.), *Suffering and Happiness*, 87, also see in this volume, Phil Withington, 'The

a distancing from Calvinist predestinarianism and with the ‘marked decline in theological discourse’ regarding natural corruption and Original Sin in favour of ‘individual moral responsibility’.¹¹ These were all hallmarks of the reconfiguration project of latitudinarian Anglicans such as Tillotson throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. Jeake’s diary certainly focussed more on benevolence than punishment, which supports these developments (though it should be remembered that his diary was only one of many accounts he may have written). However, Thompson’s suggestion that the pursuit of contentment and resignation was indicative of a rejection of divine intervention and of an ‘entirely passive state of mind: constant, placid, quietly happy, without rapture, and without even the flicker or desire for any change’, is not reflected in this chapter.¹² As will be seen in the next section, Edmund Harrold’s diary indeed shows him surrendering himself to God’s will in the hope of contentment, but he did so through the exercise of personal providentialism that was very much a site of personal agency.

6.2. Edmund Harrold (1678-1721)

Harrold was born in Manchester in April 1678, the eldest of four children. We know little about his mother but his father was Thomas Harrold, a successful tobacconist who had served on the Court Leet as a Manchester ‘inhabitant’. When Thomas’s estate

Invention of ‘Happiness’, 23-44; Paul Slack, ‘The Politics of Consumption and England’s Happiness in the Later Seventeenth Century’, *EHR*, 112 (2007).

¹¹ Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD, 1996), 138-149; Michael Heyd, ‘Changing Emotions? The Decline of Original Sin On the Eve of the Enlightenment’, in Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills (eds.), *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (Aldershot, 2005), 124. See also, Michael Heyd, ‘Original Sin, the Struggle for Stability, and the Rise of Moral Individualism in Late Seventeenth-Century England’, in Philip Benedict and Myron P. Gutmann (eds.), *Early Modern Europe: From Crisis to Stability* (Newark, 2005), 197-233.

¹² Thompson, *Suffering*, 106-7.

was passed on to his widow she received £371. Craig Horner, who has published the diary, aptly describes the Harrolds as ‘typically ‘middling sort’’.¹³

As far as we know Harrold remained in Manchester all his life. He probably attended the grammar school. He appears in parish records for four marriages and nine baptisms and in 1703 he was listed as a tenant and a ‘barber’.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the Court Leet records for the period 1688-1732 were lost so we know only from the diary that he held an ‘officer’ post; he was elected to be ‘muzzler’ ‘of mastiff dogs and bitches’ in the 1713 Michaelmas session. He missed the swearing-in ceremony which Horner states was not unusual.¹⁵ In Harrold’s time Manchester had a ‘baronial-style local government’ whereby a ‘borough reeve’ would sit as a chair of the Court Leet, with two constables and lower officials ‘including market lookers for fish and flesh, aletasters, scavengers, officers to care for the conduit, and dog muzzlers’.¹⁶ This last post was Harrold’s, the ‘status of which ... reflected his lower standing in the town’s society’.¹⁷ He and others would be elected each Michaelmas to manage, govern, police and collect taxes in Manchester. By 1770 this government proved inadequate, which is hardly surprising given the change to the town in the eighteenth century. The late seventeenth century saw the beginning of ‘dynamic growth’ and of 8,000 inhabitants many were incomers and ‘first-generation Manchester families’.¹⁸ By 1750 Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham were ‘among the top seven towns in the country, having rapidly ascended the urban ladder to join the elite club of provincial

¹³ Craig Horner (ed.), *The Diary of Edmund Harrold, Wigmaker of Manchester 1712-15* (Aldershot, 2008), xi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, x.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xi-xii, xxvi.

¹⁶ Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England* (London, 2007), 15.

¹⁷ Horner, *Diary*, xxvi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxvi. See also Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 14-5; Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), 8-9.

capitals'.¹⁹ The backbone of that growth was the expanding textile industry, and because Manchester had no corporation 'the town was not held back by laws that controlled apprenticeship, settlement and wages; therefore skilled non-natives could establish business there'.²⁰ Horner writes that Harrold must have noticed the changes to his town, particularly the widening trade and the new buildings such as the large pink sandstone church, St. Ann's, consecrated in 1712.²¹ But in the 1720s, just after Harrold's death, Manchester was still thought of as a 'township', described as 'a spacious, rich and populous inland town ... with handsome broad streets', and as one of the 'largest, most rich, populous, and busy village[s] in England'.²²

Harrold married four times. First, he married Alice Bancroft in 1702, who died in 1704. Nine months later he married Sarah, who he wrote about in his diary which opens in June 1712. As explained in detail below, Sarah died late in 1712. Just three months after Sarah's death Harrold began courting a woman, though he would marry another, Ann Horrocks, in late summer 1713; she died in 1717 after the period covered by the diary. Finally in 1720 he married Sarah Ogden, who outlived him. In total he had nine children, though six of these predeceased him.²³ It is hardly surprising, then, that Harrold wrote of 'devouring death' visiting his dwelling, and that he expected it to visit him next.²⁴

¹⁹ Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (London, 1990), 4, and for urban populations, 42.

²⁰ Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²² Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 46; William Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curiosum, or, an Account of the Antiquities, and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art, Observed in Travels through Great Britain* 2 vols. (London, 1776) i, 58, quoted in Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 15.

²³ Horner, *Diary*, xiii. On the language Harrold used to refer to his family and his many in-laws, see Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2009), 123, 127, 135-6.

²⁴ Horner, *Diary*, xiii.

Harrold's household was short of money. Horner suggests that his courtships following his second wife's death indicate he could have brought between £20 and £30 to a marriage settlement.²⁵ He had served an apprenticeship and described himself as a barber in the diary, and while he performed none of the medical procedures of a barber-surgeon, such as dentistry, he provided services such as drawing breast milk with heated glass cups.²⁶ His business was likely 'along the city's long Market Street Lane', and here he shaved and cut hair and made, maintained and sold wigs.²⁷ Wig-wearing had become popular in the Restoration period as it prevented the itchiness and poor hygiene of the fashionably powdered and set natural hair (which could not be combed).²⁸ Most wigs were made of human hair which Harrold would buy on credit, and the best hair was from country women 'thought to be free of city miasma'. The very best blond wigs might be worth above forty shillings.²⁹ We know that Harrold wore a wig himself and took orders from customers of varying status in the alehouse and elsewhere, often on credit agreement.³⁰ His wig-trade makes a good illustration of the credit networks in a township as it was unusual for him to have coin.³¹ Overall, however, while he wrote consistently of setting wigs, buying hair, and meeting customers, he does not appear to have profited significantly from his trade, writing often of being 'scant of money', or 'ill set of money in business'.³²

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xviii. On the profession of barbers and barber surgeons see Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680-1730* (London, 1982), 194-7; Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 45, 62, 65-8; Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800: Servants of the Commonwealth* (Harlow, 2000), 196, 217, 220, 229, 232.

²⁷ Horner, *Diary*, xviii.

²⁸ Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 66.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 66-7.

³⁰ Horner, *Diary*, xxi.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xxii.

³² *Ibid.*, 55, 62-3, 98.

To make up for the poor profits from his wig-trade Harrold also traded, bought, auctioneered or privately sold books to many of the customers who bought his wigs, operating through similar networks of credit and alehouse sociability.³³ He developed an awareness of the value of certain books, and his efforts in this area increased.³⁴ While this enterprise supplemented his barber-earnings it also reflected his passion for reading; he wrote in 1712 that ‘I observe yt every one hath some object, or yt is delightfull to bestow their on. Mine is b[oo]ks, for I would [sooner] lay it out on ym yn any thing for diversion or recreation, nay yn meat or drink extraordinary’.³⁵ Most of the titles he read and sold were religious, but they also included history, poetry and songs, mathematics and humanist texts, and conduct books. Among the religious texts Harrold read there were works by Anglican writers mentioned by Thompson in her study of the art of suffering.³⁶ According to Thompson these texts show ‘clearly how the old forms and meanings were incorporated into and neutralized by the new’.³⁷

From his reading we know that Harrold was engaging in new and old religious ideas and arguments. He was a regular churchgoer, attending most Sundays and sometimes ‘at both ends’. He favoured the Collegiate Church (where he was baptised) over the newly consecrated St Ann’s, which was known to be a ‘fashionable refuge for low churchmen’.³⁸ He made efforts to hear visiting clerics, occasionally noting

³³ *Ibid.*, xxv.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxiii. See also D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), 103-4; Michael Powell, ‘Taking Stock: The Diary of Edmund Harrold of Manchester’, in Barry McKay, John Hinks and Maureen Bell (eds.), *Light on the Book Trade: Essays in Honour of Peter Isaac* (New Castle, DE, 2004), 37-49.

³⁵ Horner, *Diary*, xxiii.

³⁶ Writers mentioned in Thompson’s discussion of contentment and resignation include Richard Allestree, Jeremy Taylor, Joseph Hall and Simon Patrick. In particular, Allestree’s anonymous *The Whole Duty of Man* (London; 1658; 1704) was ‘the most popular treatise on godly living in the second part of the seventeenth century’. Horner, *Diary*, 14, 26, 30, 35, 54, 55, 56, 73, 99, 112; Thompson, *Suffering*, chs. 4-6, quoted at 170. See also Ian Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing, 1700 to 1850: Narratives of Consumption* (Aldershot, 2014), 87.

³⁷ Thompson, *Suffering*, 170.

³⁸ Horner, *Diary*, xxviii-xxix.

sermon subjects in the diary, and he prepared for communion with care, abstaining if he felt unsuitable.³⁹ On account of his second and third wives, Sarah and Ann, he occasionally attended the meeting house, later Cross Street Chapel, though his preference and advocacy for the Anglican church is made clear in his struggles with Ann over her nonconformity during their courtship.⁴⁰ He also revealed in his diary that keeping ‘public duty’, ‘family duty’ and ‘private duty’ was important to him, even though he frequently missed any or all of these.

The overall impression created is that Harrold was a pious man who intended to live in accordance to the Christian principles that he read about with pleasure, and understood well. He lived modestly (perhaps out of necessity, rather than choice) in a large kinship network featuring mostly in-laws from his previous and current marriages. He also shared in the sociability of the middling ranks of Manchester society, with tradesmen like himself with whom he established both social and business relationships accompanied by credit obligations. As will become clear, this was a man full of good intentions who battled against his worst nature. Unfortunately for Harrold, that worst nature often won and the result was distress at the compromising position he found himself in society and in his standing with God. Harrold’s struggles with alcoholism and his search for resolution are discussed in the next section (6.3.). What follows here is a brief discussion of the composition and content of Harrold’s diary and of what might have motivated him to write it.

Harrold began writing his volume aged 34 and kept it from June 1712 to November 1715. He had kept an account from 1709 too, though this was lost.⁴¹ Horner’s edition of ‘Edmund Harrold. His Book’ is the version used in this chapter,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, xxviii, 1, 14-5, 42.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, xxviii-xxix.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

which is ‘as literal a transcript as possible’ where ‘nothing has been cut out’.⁴² The time accounted for in the 1712-15 diary varies. When Harrold was trying to stay sober it is a daily account and entries follow a sequence noting anything remarkable, his expenditure, and the books he had read.⁴³ The entries for 1712 demonstrate his best practice and they provide a record of family and social life, business interests, reading, public or national affairs, religious devotions, and his worries and weaknesses. This content and frequency is not consistent throughout the three years, however. By 1714, entries are less frequent, and Harrold collapses several days into one entry. By 1715 there are several long periods of silence. April was written in May, followed by a June entry, then another gap until November where Harrold recorded the events in Manchester during The Jacobite Rebellion. The diary then ends suddenly on 24 November 1715.⁴⁴

Horner asserts that Harrold ‘probably never expected, or cared, that the diary survive him’.⁴⁵ Indeed, there are no indications that this was anything but a personal account, a private enterprise for Harrold to record his memories and failings, thoughts, resolutions and prayers. The diary was a means for his self-examination and improvement. In a June 1712 entry Harrold writes,

Ive been taken up with a review of my life past since 1709, in which I find many to humble as well as raise me up. I pray God it may have this affect on me to mend what I have in my power, to mend for ye time to come, amen.⁴⁶

This entry suggests that Harrold wished to use the diary as a means of establishing regimen, and that in writing and re-reading he found the content could alter and ‘mend’

⁴² *Ibid.*, xxxiii, see also front cover of the diary at xxxv. The MS diary is at Chetham’s Library, Manchester, Mun Collection, Mun.A.2.137, ‘Diary: manuscript, 1712-15. Harrold, Edmund 1678-1721’, cited in Horner, *Diary*.

⁴³ Horner, *Diary*, xvi.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

him and his ways. His diary was therefore used as an instrument in a similar way that the spiritual diaries were used by Wallington, Josselin, Thoresby, Bury or Meeke. Harrold used the diary to regularly examine and record his actions, to note down anything that was worthy or remarkable, and to assess how far his actions were good or bad.

Once he had fallen out of the practice of keeping the diary in early 1715, Harrold looked back six weeks from 18 May and remarked, ‘fell off and never writ any in this b[oo]k ... on reflecting of all ye time past how madly it was spent, I writ the great folly of intemperance in drinking out of ye Meditations of a Divine Soul, wch god knows I have too much experienced true’.⁴⁷ Evidently writing the diary was both a duty and a useful enterprise. Without it Harrold became less conscious of the ‘madness’ that could consume him and how time could be misspent. When keeping the diary consistently, however, Harrold made regular assessments of his actions at the end of the week, month or year.⁴⁸ He marked his presence by inscribing his past. Those markers demonstrate that the diary was an act of memory, of regular retrospect, designed to keep him present and holding onto whatever capability he had to keep living well. Writing the diary was more than an act of not forgetting.⁴⁹

Ultimately, Harrold’s diary served the same purpose as a spiritual diary insofar as it was an instrument for self-examination and improvement. He also kept the diary for spiritual reasons; Horner suggests that he wrote it ‘because of his belief that he was failing God’, as a ‘means of reconciling his mortal failings’. As will be shown in section 6.4., Harrold’s diary also provided him with the means to exercise his belief

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 118-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, x.

⁴⁹ Wendy J. Wiener and G. C. Rosenwald, ‘A Moment’s Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary’, in T. L. Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (Abingdon, 2007), iv, 66.

in providence. His was not a spiritual diary in the traditional sense, however. It does not have the depth and regularity of introspection nor the preoccupation with addressing every transgression. Instead, Harrold adapted the spiritual diary and used it to watch his actions, noting only significant sins such as when he lost days' and weeks' worth of time in 'rambles'. He recorded himself in time in this diary in order to stay present, to avoid losing God-given time to the 'madness' of drink.

This section has introduced Edmund Harrold as an earnest but deeply flawed character. In many ways he is a typical 'middling' figure from a large provincial town whose diary can give considerable insight into 'plebeian' experience in the early eighteenth century.⁵⁰ The diary is also valuable because it presents an example of the influence of godly living and spiritual diary-keeping on someone who, as a drunk, would have been utterly condemned and rejected by the puritans who established those practices. To them he would have been a reprobate. It was these failings and addiction, however, that motivated Harrold to keep his diary, reflecting his desire to stay present by inscribing his past and to improve himself and his standing with God. The diary served as an instrument of resolution, a means of keeping to the pursuit of stability and contentment even amidst the 'madness' he often found himself in. The next section will look at Harrold's struggles with alcoholism and at how he wrote about them. This discussion of his problems is important because it will be argued that his providentialism was characterised by a submission to providence made necessary by the lack of stability and balance in his life. His providentialism, as enacted through his self-writing, was how he could attain contentment and satisfaction. It was a site of

⁵⁰ Horner, *Diary*, xxxi.

agency where he could find some traction in his pursuit of mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

6.3. Harrold's 'Rambles' and Resolutions

To understand Harrold's subjective experience of providentialism it is important to see that his exercise of this belief was a means of triumphing over his failings and alcoholism. The consistent theme across the three years recorded in his diary is that Harrold struggled with an irresistible and insatiable desire to drink. Despite the rules and resolutions made in his diary, this struggle affected his relationships and how he perceived himself. It affected his physical, mental, spiritual and financial stability and led him into real difficulties, reflected by his remark in the diary, 'That's poverty staring me in ye face'.⁵¹ At times he wavered between satisfaction from adhering to his 'rules' against drinking and despair at his inability to remain sober. Harrold expressed the struggle against this problem as the need to 'over come my self', or to 'conquer my self'.⁵² As section 6.4. will show, he turned to God's providences to assist him in that conquest, a move that illustrates his subjective experience of providentialism.

This section will describe Harrold's problem as he presented it in the diary. It will give a sense of drunkenness in its cultural context and how it affected Harrold's relationships and self-perception. It will then briefly describe the state of mind, body and soul that Harrold tied his drinking to: melancholy. In doing so it will give a sense of the problem Harrold was trying to mend by writing his diary and by submitting to

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 20, 33.

providence. His subjective experience is incomprehensible without an understanding of this flawed part of his character.

Horner describes the diary as the ‘confidences of a pathetic drunk whose destiny was out of his control’, and that ‘dealing’ with this problem ‘consumed Harrold’.⁵³ Harrold was indeed acutely aware of the impact of his drinking on his life, particularly on how others perceived him. He wrote that his drunkenness ‘hath got me such a name’, so much so that when he sought to be married in August 1713 the chaplain ‘tould me planely yt he would not marry me, because I was a madman in drink, and yt ye woman run her ruin in marriing me’.⁵⁴ He observed drink affecting others, too, calling it a ‘cursed appetite yt is insatiable adding drunkenness to thirst’.⁵⁵

This entry from July 1712 illustrates the place of his drinking in his life:

This morn I had my old malancholy pain seized on me wth a longing desire for drink. So I went and p[ai]d my rent, yn I s[ol]d J[ames] G[rantham] a lock of hair.... Yn had a hurrey wth wife on bed etc. Yn went into ye [Hanging] Ditch [for] a rambl[e] [at the] Keys, [the] Dragon and Cas[t]le, and [the White] Lyon till near 12 cl[oc]k, till I was ill drunken. Cost me 4½^d from 6 till 12. I made my self a great foole etc.⁵⁶

The fact that he was ‘seized’ with a desire to drink in the morning, a desire which he later satiated to the point of complete inebriation, indicates the extent to Harrold’s problem. This excerpt also introduces some themes. First, his drinking was normalised, working into a day where he had sex with his wife, paid his rent and did some business. Second, there were several alehouses that were available to him and he would visit many in one session. Third, a drinking session was described as a ‘ramble’ in the diary. Sometimes these rambles went on for days. Fourth, he described

⁵³ *Ibid.*, xxvii-xxviii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

the desire to drink as being seized with a ‘malancholy pain’. And finally, Harrold was painfully aware that the result of this ramble was his humiliation, shame and his denigration in the eyes of others.

Even in entries where he does not report drinking on a given day Harrold had past misdemeanours to worry about. After the above ‘ramble’ he writes of lying in bed until eleven, that he had ‘drank no ale to day’ but that by six he was ‘vext about my ramble last night’, especially because he missed public and private prayer, twice. ‘It’s a very great trouble to me’, he writes, ‘yt I thus expose my self, hurt my body, offend against God, set bad example, torment my mind and break my rules, make my self a laughing stock to men, greive ye holy spirit, disorder my family, fret my wife now quick, wch is al[l] against my own mind when sober’. He notes that such behaviour would undoubtedly result in a loss of his credit and reputation. He proceeds with a plea, ‘What can I do?’, to which he immediately answers ‘Im resolv’d what do. Not to drink any, a very good rule if followed, ... I beg on God his gracious assistance to wthstand temptations wth courage’.⁵⁷

The diary allowed Harrold to make resolutions and monitor progress. To keep himself in line, he could look back at entries such as the one above to remind himself of his need to reform. Sometimes he listed his rules:

By Gods help, I will observe these rules, 1st[t] not to drink any strong drink [and] fasting in a morn; 2^d, not above a pint at a sit[t]ing of business; 3^{dly} a[s] litle a[s] posible in publick houses; 4[th], but keep home with ye greatest diligence and sobriety. Note on this date always, amen, etc, etc.⁵⁸

However, when he failed to keep to those rules, the diary looks markedly different:

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 8 clock at [it?] again. 29 Promis'd
a restauration of self to w[i]f[e]. 30th Mist church, but meditated at home. 31st
Ive promised w[i]f[e] sobriety for greatness.⁵⁹

16 This day ill till noon. Made a sad week, ram[bling] and ill. 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 Worse of all ... 26 Ill. 27 Worse. 28 Mended 29 As so. 30 Under
pennance. 31 Begane to reform.⁶⁰

When reform was effective and Harrold was keeping his resolutions the change in tone is considerable, such as in September 1712 when he writes 'now I bless God I'm got into my rules again, and am got very hearty again, and with Gods assistance, I will resolve so to continue'.⁶¹

Harrold's difficulty, alluded to in his rules, was that many of his social and commercial interactions took place in the alehouse. Drinking accompanied business transactions and he would have 'treated' customers or creditors in the alehouse, just as he would his family.⁶² The sociability of 'company' was therefore a big part of the problem because as he explains, 'when a man is in company, it has a great influence upon him to stay and yt many times to excess, so yt it causes second thoughts and those relentings and wishes yt he had not so done'.⁶³

Harrold's observation here about company is in keeping with scholarship about alehouse sociability and the role of drinking in English society. The 'company' he refers to covered a complex mix of social interactions, but 'even in their most casual encounters, 'company' became a 'thing' within its own boundaries, its functions, its rules and its convergent – and often conflicting – subjectivities and narratives'.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 115-6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31-2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, xxvii.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁴ Phil Withington, 'Company and Sociability in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 32, 3 (2007), 291-307, at 307.

Indeed, the alehouse was a site where many types of company and occasions for formal and ‘informal recreation’ took place.⁶⁵ It was a ‘natural centre for all forms of social activity, especially among the poor’, and exchanging drinks was one of the ‘simple everyday actions [that] oiled the wheels of social intercourse in a society in which “good neighbourliness” was a critically important social virtue’.⁶⁶ For Harrold to have avoided the alehouse would have meant his exclusion from an essential site of communal and commercial sociability in English society. His drunkenness therefore needs to be seen in ‘its cultural context’, where ‘drink was an essential and ubiquitous social lubricant’, rather than seen only in light of the ‘absolute standards of the moralists’.⁶⁷

Moralists had plenty to say about drunkenness, however, and their condemnation would have influenced Harrold’s feelings of shame and guilt considerably, as well as informing how he was perceived by others. It was for their association with ‘drunkenness, brawling, swearing, gaming, dancing and revelling’ that alehouses were subject to so much scrutiny and legislation during the early modern period.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), 63.

⁶⁶ Keith Wrightson, ‘Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660’, in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton, 1981), 6, 10-1.

⁶⁷ Wrightson, ‘Alehouses’, 6.

⁶⁸ Wrightson, *English Society*, 167-70, at 168; Wrightson, ‘Alehouses’, 11-2. See also Great Britain, *A Collection of all the Statutes Now in Force, Relating to the Duties of Excise in England* (London, 1764), 335, quoted in Cockayne, *Hubbub*, 45; P. Clark, ‘The Alehouse and the Alternative Society’, in Pennington and Thomas (eds.), *Puritans*; P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History* (London, 1983); A. L. Martin, *Alcohol, Sex and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2001); Beat A. Kümin, B. Tlusty, and B. Ann (eds.), *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002); John Chartres, ‘The Eighteenth-Century English Inn: A Transient “Golden Age”?’ in Beat A. Kümin, B. Tlusty, and B. Ann (eds.), *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002); Adam Smyth, ‘“It were far better be a Toad, or a Serpent, then a Drunkard”’: Writing About Drunkenness’, in A. Smyth (ed.), *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2004); Phil Withington, ‘Intoxication and the Early Modern City’, in S. Hindle, A. Shepard, and J. Walter (eds.), *Remaking English Society* (Cambridge, 2013), 135-63; Phil Withington and Angela McShane (eds.), *Cultures of Intoxication, P&P Supplement 9* (Oxford, 2014); Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2014), especially chapters 3 and 4; Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women’s Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York; Oxford, 1996; 1999); James Brown, ‘Alehouse Licensing and State Formation in Early Modern England’, in Jonathan

Drunkenness was hardly uncommon and as Phil Withington notes, there are ‘umpteenth incidents’ stemming from its cause in the church court records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁹ The problem for the moralists was that drunkenness, often described as filthy, horrid, unclean, abominable, and associated with insubordination and the erosion of deference, ‘signalled impending criminal behaviour’. It was a dangerous state because it was associated with a disturbed mind and seen as a vice in a ‘chain of sin’ to other cursed sins.⁷⁰ Drunkenness was therefore to be avoided not only to preserve your reputation and your health, but also for the sake of your soul and standing with God.

Again to put Harrold’s alcoholism in context, we might compare him to another diarist, George Hilton (1673-1725). A Jacobite from Westmorland, Hilton kept a diary from 1700 which details how from the age of twenty-six he was ‘galloping down the high road to ignominious ruin’. Strong liquor was his weakness and he ‘fell-a-drinking’ at any opportunity.⁷¹ Hilton shared Harrold’s shame, guilt and remorse at his frequent drunkenness, particularly because it made him a target for robbers. He also sought the assistance of God in his efforts to curb his drinking.⁷² In contrast to Harrold, however, Hilton was of higher social standing and was ‘no social outlaw’: ‘he was on easy terms with the men of the northern squierarchy’.⁷³ Perhaps this signals a shift in the perception of drunkenness and responsibility where for the wealthy or

Herring, Ciaran Regan, Darin Weinberg, and Phil Withington (eds.), *Intoxication and Society: Problematic Pleasures of Drugs and Alcohol* (Basingstoke, 2013), 110-135; Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters: Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke, 2007); Phil Withington, ‘Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England’, *HJ*, 54, 3 (2011), 631-57;

⁶⁹ Withington, ‘Company’, 292.

⁷⁰ Dana Rabin, ‘Drunkenness and Responsibility for Crime in the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of British Studies*, 44, 3 (2005), 457-77, at 457, 459, 461.

⁷¹ Anne Hillman, *The Rake’s Diary: The Journal of George Hilton* (Kendal, 1994), cited in Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 69.

⁷² Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 70-1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 70-1.

better sorts it was a 'private vice', whereas for the poor and middling sorts it was a 'threat of political mischief'.⁷⁴ Harrold's drunkenness fell in the latter category and certainly did no favours to his reputation and ability to obtain credit.⁷⁵ Even in its cultural context this was a dangerous state for him to descend into.

It was mentioned above that Harrold's drinking problem affected his physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. This is because he attributed his rambles and his need to drink to melancholy, or 'malancholy pain'.⁷⁶ Harrold's struggle for stability and desire for contentment stemmed from the fact that he considered himself to be in emotional, mental, physical and spiritual imbalance. For example, in December 1714 he wrote,

Dull business and dull temper. Been very slight in duty to G[o]ld and men and s[e]lf. Thus mad[d]led in ye world [I] knows not what to think by things very melancholy. Its observable how a man spends Sunday, so all w[ee]k. I am sadlely fal'n of[f] from religion and grown instable.⁷⁷

Melancholy was not just a physical state, though it was an embodied one. According to Renaissance Galenic physicians the disease of melancholy could be diagnosed by symptoms of 'fear, sorrow, hallucinations, delusions, anxiety, paranoia, a propensity to solitude and suicide'.⁷⁸ Melancholy was not just sadness, though sadness was a far larger 'affective field' that could include melancholy but 'did not necessarily equate with it'.⁷⁹ The material cause of melancholy was the excess or corruption of the cold

⁷⁴ Rabin, 'Drunkenness', 457.

⁷⁵ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relation in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998).

⁷⁶ Horner, *Diary*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-4.

⁷⁸ Angus Gowland, 'Melancholy, Passions and Identity in the Renaissance', in Brian Cummings and F. Sierhuis (eds.), *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture* (Farnham, 2013), 75-93, at 76. See also Angus Gowland, 'Medicine, Psychology, and the Melancholic Subject in the Renaissance', in Elena Carrera (ed.), *Emotions and Health 1200-1700* (Leiden; Boston, 2013), 185-219; J. Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford, 2000).

⁷⁹ Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2016), 4.

and dry humour, black bile. It affected the mixture of humours in the bodily parts, especially the brain, and the healthy flowing of 'spirits' around the body.⁸⁰ Melancholy was not only a bodily disease though. Sometimes the cause of imbalanced humours lay in the 'malfunctioning imagination' or from the passions.⁸¹ Because it was understood in the context of the reciprocal relationship between the body and soul this was a bodily, psychic and spiritual disease, and dangerous.

Although Harrold was writing well after the advent of Cartesian philosophy that divided the soul from the body, there is evidence that he subscribed to humoral physiology. In a March 1715 entry he discusses the nature of his melancholy. He writes that 'nothing can affect me but Earth'. Earth was the corresponding element to black bile. He continues by observing that sometimes he appeared with reason or 'sence' and at other times without. He explains by stating 'thus hot and cold Earth and air in us appear. I say some of ye 4 elements are always obvious in ye souls faculties, and so exercise ye pasions, and especially hope and fear, love and hatred, also ye means and extrems of 'em. Thus, we humane creatures are never in one stay but post away our spirits to God yt gave ym'.⁸² This entry denotes Harrold's understanding of his soul and body as being in a reciprocal relationship, and for his tendency towards the earthy humour black bile. He considered himself to be in an habitual state of melancholy.⁸³

Harrold's self-diagnosis of melancholy is significant because melancholy, combined with his serial drunkenness, earned him ill favour from God. His prognosis was worse still: a descent into further sin. It was also a self-fulfilling prophecy because

⁸⁰ Gowland, 'Melancholy, Passions', 77.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

⁸² Horner, *Diary*, 118.

⁸³ Gowland, 'Melancholy, Passions', 80.

as Richard Baxter posited at the time melancholics saw themselves to be ‘undone’, ‘without grace or hope’, and that excessive sorrow and lack of reason merely reinforced this sorry state.⁸⁴ Harrold therefore considered himself to be in a perilous condition of melancholy, drunkenness and out of God’s sight and favour. The strength required to climb out of that state would have been considerable, and it is Harrold’s efforts at resolution that we can see in his diary.

In the next section it will be argued that providentialism was a key tool in Harrold’s attempt to regain control over his life and to find the strength needed to get closer to God, to be ‘settled’ and achieve ‘quiet contentment and satisfaction of mind’. This section has demonstrated that such an attempt was not inconsiderable. Harrold was a drunk when being a drunk was a sin in a ‘chain of sins’. He could not easily escape the object of his addiction because drink was integral to his business and social life. His drunkenness was then compounded by his melancholy, a state which put him at a distance from God. He was imbalanced in every sense that he would have understood it. It is not therefore surprising that when he prayed to God for assistance, it was for his help to ‘over come my self’, to ‘conquer my self’; his chronic instability had shaped his self-perception but providence was the means by which he could remedy that diseased self.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow by Faith and Physic*, Sermon XI (1683) in Samuel Annesley (ed.), *A Continuation of Morning-Exercise Questions* (1683), 263-303, at 269, quoted in David Walker, ‘Piety and the Politics of Anxiety in Nonconformist Writing of the Later Stuart Period’, in Alec Ryrie and T. Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke 2016), 144-166, at 152-3, 150-58.

⁸⁵ Horner, *Diary*, 20, 33.

6.4. Harrold's Providentialism, Resignation and Pursuit of Contentment

In this section, it will be argued that Harrold exercised providentialism in pursuit of satisfaction and contentment, the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual state described in Rokeby's phrase. Harrold sought this state to regain balance and control over his drunkenness and melancholy, and he prayed for God's assistance in that endeavour. It will also be argued that he enacted providentialism through his self-writing and that this exercise, when accompanied by his resolution against drink, could secure feelings of satisfaction and contentedness.

What is remarkable about Harrold's providentialism in contrast to other diarists is that he exercised his belief by resigning himself to God's will and submitting to the operations of providence. Rather than being a mark of passivity it is argued here that Harrold's resignation is an example of the agency integral to self-writing. Harrold utilised providence to lift himself from instability and into contentment, to conquer his diseased self in favour of satisfaction of mind. This chapter therefore contributes an unusual example of the subjective experience of providentialism to this thesis, which advances the argument that the persistent appeal and utility of this belief lay in the subjectivity with which it was exercised. This section will first describe the presence of providence in the diary. It will then explain Harrold's exercise of providentialism, which was applied towards three interlinked areas of his life: his drinking, his financial and business concerns, and his family. The main focus will be on the confluence of these three troubles in a series of events from November 1712 to August 1713.

Harrold invoked providence regularly, but not in every entry. For example, he might have remarked that 'providence has an end in it' after an event or discovery,

such as when he discovered a customer having bought wigs from someone else.⁸⁶ Providence might be invoked alongside a prayer, such as when he ‘pray[ed] constantly to my God for daily bread’ and he recognised that ‘providence never fails to succour ym that trust in him’.⁸⁷ Harrold also used the diary to theorise about the workings of providence in his life and how he ought to react to those providences. In this June 1713 entry we can see him thinking about how providence was at work and how he was best to resign his will to that operation:

Yir at a Chester Fair almost [all] to day. Tis wonderfull to see ye working of providence in contingencies, how everyday brings new things to pass unthought of and unseen till ye jump together above our reasonable demonstrations of the causes thereof. So yt I’m sattissfied, yt tis best to resign my will to Gods in all things and waite his time, for what he will do shall be done. Ile submit, o Lord, grant me patience and content with my present condition till thy appointed time of my change shall come, and I believe yt thou wilt work al[I] things for good to ym yt loves thee above al[I] things, else grant me, o God, power and strength to overcome ye temptations to wch my nature is most prone, yt I may not offend thee any more rioting and drunkenness, but yt I may live a righteous, godly and a sober life hereafter, amen.⁸⁸

Here we can see Harrold examining providential causation and observing its operation through ‘contingencies’. Most important is his reaction to those providences, his acknowledgement that to be ‘sattissfied’ he must ‘resign my will to God in all things’. He must await providences to reach a state of contentment and satisfaction.

There are three key areas of his life which Harrold recorded in his diary and in which he observed the workings of providence. Each demonstrate his exercise of personal providentialism, as he discerned or hoped for God to intervene directly in his affairs. These areas are inseparable: his drinking, his business and financial welfare, and his familial welfare, including his marital relationships. In his drinking, Harrold

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

looked to God to assist him in keeping his resolutions, writing that ‘I trust in God [that] he will turn things to ye best in his own good time, if I will but be sober and watch unto prayer to him, for strength to go on and persevere unto ye end in all sobriety’.⁸⁹ When Harrold was ‘dull in business’, which was fairly often, and ‘in a great strait what to do’ he wrote in December 1713 that ‘Ive no way but to do my best by frugal[it]y, sobriety and laboriousness’ – to do what he could – ‘and leave ye issue to divine providence, for I beleive yt he will either remove my tro[u]bl[e]s or sanctifie ym to me, or remove me from ym’.⁹⁰ When he had increased his book-trading and had ‘a liberary in gi[s]tation’ he knew not ‘what or wch way God will order matters for me ... but Ile leave my self wholly to his providence w[o]rk, and I do beleive things wil work together for my good, both spiritual and temporall’. He completed this entry with a prayer: ‘I besweech God to give content in my condition’.⁹¹ The common theme between these excerpts is that Harrold recognised the need to strive for sobriety and success, that he needed to change. He looked to God for assistance in his efforts and saw that change required trusting God’s will. Only providence would decide if his efforts would grant him satisfaction and contentment.

Harrold’s pursuit of a settled family life and his efforts to achieve sobriety and success were interdependent. These three areas – drinking, business, family – were his three main troubles and the diary does not disaggregate them. For example, his desire to have a stable household was as much about avoiding bad alehouse company as it was about having companionship, and the avoidance of bad company was to save his pocket, too. Therefore, rather than trying to explore Harrold’s subjective experience of providentialism thematically, the rest of this section will look at a short chronology

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

that encompasses each of these three concerns. It will focus on the months from November 1712 when his second wife Sarah became ill, through the turmoil that followed her death, and through his search for a new wife. This is the space of about eight months. Ralph Houlbrooke described Harrold during this period as drinking heavily ‘in order to drown his grief’, and his diary as a ‘vicious cycle of depression, drinking, and hangovers, interrupted by efforts to pull himself together’.⁹² These entries provide as thorough a representation of Harrold’s subjective experience and exercise of providentialism as can be gained from his diary.

This series of events begins with the birth of Harrold’s daughter, Sarah, in late November 1712. Sarah was also his second wife’s name, to whom he had been married since 1704, making this Harrold’s longest marriage. He wrote of Sarah being ‘ill’ for several days, most likely in labour, before ‘she brought forth a daughter’. Harrold then observed, accounted and remembered this mercy with, ‘I bless God for my wifes deliverance, I hope she’l do well’.⁹³ During this time Harrold was suffering with his own ‘midered condition’ upon which he reflected, like Meeke, that he needed to ‘patiently bear these light afflictions which are but for a moment’.⁹⁴ He also reflected that he ‘had 1000 thoughts pro and con of things, but I am satisfied it is best to trust God for all. We are not able to know his will, and what is best for us we ponder for naught now’.⁹⁵ Rather than improving on the precise sin that had provoked his affliction he put himself into God’s hands, which correlates with Thompson’s argument about the shift in the art of suffering discussed above.

⁹² Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), 231.

⁹³ Horner, *Diary*, 48.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

Harrold's afflictions soon escalated. On 17 December his wife Sarah died, leading Harrold to pray 'Lord, sanctifie this affliction to me ... I besweech God almighty, who has taken my dear asistant from me, to asist me with grace and wisdom to live religiously and virtuously, and to eye his providence in this dispensation, and to weigh and consider before I act any thing'.⁹⁶ Here Harrold acknowledges God's punishment of him, observes, accounts and remembers it, and notes his need to learn from it. The excerpt reads far more like Meeke's diary which exposes the influence of the spiritual diary, and also more like the traditional personal providentialism shared across seventeenth-century personal accounts. Though instead of 'improving' this affliction Harrold descended into grief and 'rambling'.

By the end of 1712 Harrold was drinking and at odds with his family as a result. He tried to secure the services of a housekeeper in Sarah's absence, only to receive 'a lecture for my debauches ye month past, and instead of counsel [I had] discouragement in my condition'.⁹⁷ The entry for 1 January 1713 records that he 'entred on this year with bad health, a troubled mind and scant of money', and that 'Dr[i]nk still does me a mischief now'. His instability was at a peak. His 'breaches, rambles, sudden words, and -irregular actions to Himself [God] and men, and my self' racked his thoughts, and he could 'find no way but to return to my God and father [w]home I have offended'. His resolution was to 'resign my affairs to God alone'.⁹⁸ The month after Sarah's death was undoubtedly a low for this man who was already battling other demons, and he ended January 1713 'with loss, grieffe and shame and pain'.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54-5, 57, 59.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

By February the tone of the diary shifts. Harrold writes of curling ‘8 wigs this week, and drawn ym and mix reversions for 3 wigs’. Though he was ‘ill set for money’, he blessed ‘God for his providence thus far ... desiring yt I may keep to in tempter and sincerely, desire to wait on his alter’.¹⁰⁰ His exercise of providentialism sits here alongside the record of his labour, and his waiting on God sits alongside his more stable state. By all appearances – and it may just be the appearance – Harrold’s diary-writing and providentialism both reflected and reinforced a sense of stability, control, and contentment.

Harrold’s state of mind had indeed probably changed, indicated by his intention in March to look for a wife. He writes that ‘all perwades me not to medle with widow and children ... but let God’s providence be my inheritance. I will do my utmost and leave ye rest to his will’.¹⁰¹ The widow he refers to was Ellen Howorth, who he would court until early June. But April brought with it the death of his baby daughter Sarah, which caused further instability, meaning that for most of the courtship he was either drunk or atoning for mistakes made when drunk. Sarah’s death was ‘a great surprise’ to Harrold and he writes of being ‘very much indisposed in mind and body’ and ‘begs’ for God to ‘influence me to come an universall reformation of my life’. He had thus created a further resolution in the face of this affliction, and ‘flee[d] to ... God almighty’.¹⁰² After the deaths of both his wife and daughter Harrold repeatedly writes of ‘submitting’ himself to providence. Rather than seeking providence and feeling as Meeke did, Harrold relinquished feeling and passed his future to providence.

For example, in Harrold’s courtship with Ellen Howorth he leaves it to God to determine what will happen; ‘I pray God, prosper or reject wch will not be to his glory

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 67.

and my good here and hereafter'; 'I pray God, direct me to ye best, for I'm in a great strait betwixt two, whether marry or not'.¹⁰³ By late May he was using his diary to lay out plans, and leaving it to providence to decide the result:

this night I tould her I'd come towards 9. She said she would not be out oth way then. So Ile put this petition in my prayers, that if it be Gods will, we go together. For good things will al[l] conspire thereto. If not, she'l be out oth way, and so I must then be satisfied yt providence hath not determined us together So [to] my mind, Gods will, what he binds, Ile not loose.¹⁰⁴

Ellen did show up, but the next day Harrold 'felt out with [her] in my drink' and they parted ways in the ensuing days.¹⁰⁵ Harrold perceived these events to have been 'all by Gods permission to let me see yt I cannot do of my self anything as of self, but ... sufficiently if of God'.¹⁰⁶ In other words, Harrold considered his failed courtship to be a reminder to submit to God's will because he could not achieve change by himself. He needed to resign himself over to the workings of providence. At the end of the affair he reflected philosophically that God had 'turn'd it good to me, for I went home and much satisfied with what befell me', and that he would 'submit to his will' because 'God in his providence has great things to bring about, for every day hath its visicitudes, and works wonders to us motralls who can but see a little forward'.¹⁰⁷ Once he had resigned to providence, seeing that it worked for his good, he was 'satisfied'. His exercise of providentialism, then, was a sublimation of his self to providence, an act which provoked a new and sought-after state of contentment.

Almost as though he had learnt his lesson with Ellen, during his courtship of his future wife Ann, Harrold writes regularly of his submission to providence. From the

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 71, 74.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

start, when he first writes of meeting with Ann in mid-June 1713, he prays to God ‘to turn evill away, and so settle and compose my mind, that I may once more come to a settled life and regularly live and serve thee’.¹⁰⁸ This makes clear that for Harrold marriage was part of his reform and was instrumental in ‘settling’ and ‘composing’ his mind. During the negotiations he turned to providence, noting that ‘if it please God’ he would ‘close with my matters and finish soon’.¹⁰⁹ The problem was that Ann was a nonconformist and Harrold had ‘her upon hallches about conforming’, but nevertheless he would ‘leave all to providence to determin for me, for whatever he does is good, and Ile submit to Gods will in al[l] things’.¹¹⁰

By the third week of July the courtship was beginning to drag on unresolved; he writes of being ‘on ramble, and disorder about settleing’. Unbalanced once again he prays ‘to God to order my affair yt I may on[c]jest more live regularly religiously and soberly, for I’m realy weary of this course and I can’t amend’.¹¹¹ It seemed to Harrold that it was imperative he marry, for he was slipping from his resolutions in favour of his worst nature. Once again, he writes ‘let God work his will about her. Ive acted to my power and policy, etc’.¹¹² Harrold had done all he could, all that his ‘power and policy’ could achieve, but his efforts were not sufficient and he needed providence to see him through to satisfaction. By the end of July Harrold had his desire, he had ‘made up marriage with Anne Harracks all remarkable’.¹¹³ The effect on him was considerable – for a while. Instead of being the ‘laughing stock’ for being a drunk, he

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80-1. ‘Hallches’ likely meaning to fasten, tie, or knot, in other words, to be in knots. See ‘Halch, v.,’ *OED*, <http://www.oed.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/Entry/83371?redirectedFrom=halch#eid> (accessed 11 January 2018).

¹¹¹ Horner, *Diary*, 81-2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 81-2.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

writes in August 1713 that he ‘worked close’ and that he was ‘laughted [at] ab[ou]t it’. Providence had guided him into his ‘rules’ and he had succeeded in trusting that ‘God will work for good at last, because he knows whats best for me’.¹¹⁴ His resignation to providence had again rendered the feeling he sought: contentment and satisfaction.

This series of events is just one of several in Harrold’s diary and the diary ends on a less pleasant note. It was not long before Harrold was out of his ‘rules’, rambling and ‘fretting’ his wife. By 1715 he was despairing at his lack of strength and resolution, and his imbalanced, unsettled mind reinforced his habits and ruined his hopes for reformation. But this short chronology demonstrates the role providence played in his life. It illustrates the utility of the belief as it was exercised and enacted in his self-writing. For Harrold, exercising providentialism was about observing, accounting and remembering mercies and judgements, but also about surrendering himself to God’s will. While he saw the importance of acting in his own ‘power and policy’ he ultimately could not trust himself or his judgement to guide his future successfully, and thus he submitted to God’s will, and the manifestation of that will, providence, in order to secure quiet contentment and satisfaction of mind.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has used the diary of Edmund Harrold to demonstrate the truly subjective nature of how providence was experienced in the early eighteenth century. It has provided an example of a writer inspired by godly figures and texts of the previous century, whose diary was informed by but was not imitative of the spiritual diary.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

Harrold does not fit the image of a puritan; indeed, he was condemned by a chaplain for his sinful behaviour and was well known in his community as a drunk. His diary therefore provides us with the means to see providentialism as it was experienced and exercised by a flawed, middling-sort man, who extends our account of providentialism beyond the experiences of the godly 'hotter sorts'.

This chapter has argued that Harrold was exercising personal providentialism through his self-writing, and in doing so he achieved distinct modes of feeling: contentment and satisfaction. The exercise of his belief also influenced how he perceived himself. He made it clear that he wanted to resolve against drunkenness, and that to do so he needed to 'conquer' himself. Exercising his belief in providence allowed him to do that because he surrendered himself to God's will, and in emptying himself he saw an improvement.

It has also been argued that resignation was a key characteristic of Harrold's experience and exercise of providentialism. This, and his search for contentment, aligns Harrold's case study with arguments that the art of suffering changed from a specific practice concerned with specific sins and afflictions to a more general attainment of silence, contentment, satisfaction and resignation. In other words, Harrold's diary exhibits a change in how providentialism was exercised and experienced, whilst also exhibiting elements of continuity in practice through self-writing.

His case study does not, however, point to the encroachment of anti-providential thought that Thompson posits. Quite the opposite. Harrold's diary entries reveal the critical role providence played in some English lives, and how powerfully it informed their sense of self. Those entries also test Thompson's argument that contentment and resignation denoted 'an entirely passive state of mind: constant, placid, quietly happy

... without even the flicker or desire for any change'.¹¹⁵ This may describe the state sought or described in treatises but it does not describe Harrold's experience or how the belief was enacted and lived. Harrold's providentialism was entirely about change. It was about resolution, reformation and a turning over of self. His writing, where he enacted this providentialism, was a vital site of agency, not passivity.

This chapter has therefore demonstrated the adaptability of providence and the continuing exercise of personal providentialism in this period of transition. It has shown that providence informed how individuals felt about themselves and how they saw themselves within their worlds. The subjectivity with which this belief was experienced and exercised was therefore instrumental in ensuring its appeal and utility. And Edmund Harrold's diary reminds us how vital providence remained in English life and culture into the eighteenth century.

¹¹⁵ Thompson, *Suffering*, 106-7.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has sought to provide an account of the subjective, lived experience of providentialism in the period *c.*1660-*c.*1720. It has demonstrated substantial change in providential ideas and beliefs – beliefs that had, since the late sixteenth century, permeated through Protestant practice, the national Protestant calendar, and popular culture. The Restoration saw the reconfiguration of providence by clerics, the eroding of its credibility as an explanatory system, and the marginalisation of experimental and divinatory forms of providentialism after the conflict of the mid-seventeenth century. Consequently, the period *c.*1660-*c.*1720 saw the context and position of providence in English culture change. The historiography of providence considers the treatises that initiated this reconfiguration, and the changes across national politics, attitudes to the environment, and economic and social behaviour. Underexplored is a sense of how the changing role of providence in these separate facets of English culture coexisted and played out in individual lives, or indeed how providentialism continued or ceased to inform how individuals viewed the world around them, and themselves within it.

This thesis has sought to address this deficit by providing an account of what providence did for individuals, and how they used, applied and moulded it, how it felt, and how it shaped their perceptions of themselves. It has also sought to qualify a narrative commonly cited in the history of providence: that the period also witnessed

the denigration or decline of personal providentialism, a term which refers to the direct operations or interventions by God in individual lives.

To address these problems, the thesis has provided an in-depth reconstruction of the lived or subjective experience of providentialism. By approaching the problem this way it has sought to learn more about the wider changes in providentialism by using the lens of personal agency and experience. Furthermore, the thesis has utilised emotion as a category of analysis, alert to the subtle feelings and emotional resonances of providentialism. The sources used to build this approach were personal accounts, which were problematised and examined in order to understand their construction, their cultural context, and how we can understand the nature of subjective experience within them.

While many diaries and autobiographies were consulted, the sources selected for case studies were those that provided the in-depth detail required to reconstruct experiences of providentialism. These texts needed to communicate something about providence but also had to provide enough personal detail to place that providential belief and exercise in the context of everyday life. The four main case studies were also selected to provide the thesis with a loose chronological framework to give a sense of time passing generation-to-generation.

Looking now to findings of the chapters and how they have advanced the main thesis, chapter 2 established the argument that self-writers enacted and exercised their providential belief in writing, re-writing and reading their personal accounts. It was argued that the spiritual diary influenced many in this period, meaning that the exercise of providentialism appeared in texts designed for more than just spiritual improvement. All except one of the main case studies belonged to this category. The chapter also argued that a first-person account is an act of memory, and because our

sense of memory is also our sense of self, what is written in that account is constitutive and imitative of that self. Moreover, because providence featured in that writing it therefore featured in the writer's sense of self and inner world, which establishes the point that providence and subjectivity informed each other. Finally, it asserted that the exercise of providentialism involved observing, accounting and remembering mercies and judgments. The role of this chapter was to establish these key arguments, allowing subsequent chapters to build upon them.

The main argument of chapter 3 was that the inherent mystery and elasticity of providence meant that it was a very malleable concept in the hands of these writers. The extent of this elasticity was demonstrated in how Elizabeth Freke found so many providential interpretations that instead of clarity she found contradiction and instead of meaning she found incoherence. Her exercise of providentialism, enacted in her remembrances, reinforced and provoked feelings of ambivalence and shaped how she viewed herself as an infirm, embittered and isolated gentlewoman. Her case study served as a reminder that providence was used by individuals to 'make sense' of their lives, but that they did not always achieve this with what we would recognise as coherence. The chapter overall illustrated how providentialism was necessarily and inherently subjective.

Chapter 4 identified elements of continuity in providentialism. This continuity was demonstrated through Robert Meeke's adherence to the tradition of spiritual diary-keeping. Meeke exhibited the intense self-examination and introspection typical of those texts, and his alertness to sin was also an alertness to the providences he would receive. Continuity was also demonstrated in the affective dimension of Meeke's providentialism. Like other spiritual diarists he sought feeling and a softened heart

receptive to God's special attentions. Much of what Meeke exercised and felt shared traits with the experience of his early seventeenth-century godly forebears.

By contrast, chapter 5 suggested change in the experience of providentialism. Samuel Jeake's diary offered the opportunity to see a reconfiguration of providence and God. His selection of only smiling providences denoted his confidence in a benevolent deity who watched over his endeavours with care, which was a stark contrast to the wrathful God who sent afflictions to Meeke in punishment of his sins. This chapter also emphasised the ability of these writers to adapt providence to their social, religious and intellectual circumstances. Jeake synthesised his belief in providence with his interest and study of astrology – a study that was underwritten by rationalistic Baconian principles of experiment and investigation. This chapter therefore again highlighted the malleability of providence. Individuals could make use of this belief and idea because it was by its nature subjective.

Chapter 6 continued to identify change in the experience of providentialism, and the subjectivity that allowed individuals to make that change and still find it useful. Edmund Harrold used his diary-writing and providence as instruments in his struggle to overcome alcoholism. To find the strength to keep his resolutions and to conquer his worst self he surrendered himself wholly to providence. His goal was to find balance and contentedness, rather than to correct the specific ways he had provoked God. This chapter therefore identified a shift from Meeke's providentialism to Harrold's model of resignation and contentment. It argued that providentialism continued to be an assertion of agency and selfhood, as well as demonstrating the subjectivity that allowed providence to adjust to change.

Because these writers were observing, accounting and remembering God directly at work in their lives they all demonstrated the imaginative and creative exercise of

personal providentialism – the kind of providence historians have said declined in this period. This is one of the key findings of this thesis. The reason that these individuals could continue to practice this type of providentialism was because the concept was inherently subjective. They adapted it and used it as they needed, and in doing so they wrote (and felt) providence into their sense of self. Therefore, the overall finding is that providentialism saw change in this period, but it did so precisely because it was a vital and adaptable concept and belief. It continued to be used by individuals to make sense of their world into the eighteenth century.

The significance of these findings is that they contribute to the historiography of providence an in-depth account of how the broader factors of intellectual and ideological change were manifest at an individual level. It also contributes an account of how these changes were accommodated and synthesised with existing ideas, beliefs and practices, and how they followed threads of continuity, such as the language and form in which the exercise of providentialism was expressed and enacted. It allows us to see how intricately providence was adapted and manipulated in constantly shifting social, cultural, religious and intellectual contexts. This contribution therefore encourages consideration of how providence was adapted by individuals who found it to be a useful instrument for making sense of the world and their place in it, and who found comfort, not by knowing, but by feeling that there was some sense to be had at all.

That said, not all self-writers wrote about providentialism in the way described in the above chapters. As acknowledged in chapter 2, some writers made only the rarest of references to providence and these do not give much sense of the writer's experience of the belief. Of the substantial body of texts referred to or consulted in this research – including those that were discounted – there were not many that met

the criteria to be a case study in chapters 3-6. This either suggests that providentialism was not as prevalent as the historiography has led us to believe, or that writers were simply not motivated by spiritual exercise. Either way, because the sample of writers exercising providentialism in their accounts itself belongs to a relatively small sample of early modern society, it calls into question how widely applicable the findings of this thesis are.

Two examples can help here; they serve as a reminder that the fluidity of early modern texts, combined with the subjectivity with which providence was exercised within them, means that we cannot expect providence to be as readily accessible as it is in other sources. The first example lies in the almanacs of Joseph Bufton (b.1651), a journeyman wool-comber from Coggeshall, Essex. Bufton ‘jotted down’ notes in the blank pages of his almanacs.¹ By 1716 he wrote that ‘I reckon I have here 22 Almanacks, 13 Riders, one of which I keep on my board and write dayly’, which gives a sense of how long he was keeping these notes.² He recorded sermons, ‘the intervals of business, passing events, and extracts from printed volumes’; ‘had he lived two or three centuries before’, Bryan Dale reflected, ‘he would have been a monk, and left behind him a ... minute and interesting chronicle’.³

Among Bufton’s many observations – dreadful storms and earthquakes, injuries and deaths in the family – one finds few invocations of providence and none where he invoked ‘providence’ personally. There is the rare phrase ‘blessed be God’, but otherwise providence is conspicuously absent.⁴ By all appearances Bufton’s accounts

¹ Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012), 198.

² Bryan Dale, *The Annals of Coggeshall, Otherwise Sunndeon, In the County of Essex* (London, 1863), 256-76, at 259.

³ Dale, *Annals*, 257.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 275.

would have been of little value to this thesis and his notebooks might indicate that providence was just not a priority, and certainly not exercised in such a way as to provoke feeling or inform self-perception. The reason that Bufton's diary is mentioned here, however, is because he took great time and care to copy out lengthy extracts from printed volumes of cautionary tales and deliverances, under a heading 'Some Storys Taken out of ye Book Intitled, Wonderfull Prodigies of Judgment & mercy'.⁵ He also copied out stories of William III's victories against the French. The latter excerpts are not surprising because as noted in chapter 1 we know that national providentialism persisted into the nineteenth century. But the stories of wrong-doers being found out and punished by providence suggests a participation in a popular culture where special providence and personal providentialism were still very much current. And his copying out these stories suggests that he personally found value or instruction in them. What this practice suggests of his providentialism is limited, but this example goes some way to show that an absence of providential language as described in this thesis does not denote an absence of providentialism altogether.

The second example is the diary of Dudley Ryder (1691-1756), a future Chief Justice of the King's Bench (1754-56) and a man described as 'harmless' but of 'monumental blandness'.⁶ Born into a family of drapers in Hackney, Ryder was brought up as a dissenter and his grandfather had been an ejected minister from Warwickshire.⁷ He had attended a dissenting academy, then was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1713. It was as a law student 1715-16 that Ryder kept a shorthand

⁵ Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, 'Diary of Joseph Bufton', MS 9, fols. 1r-8r.

⁶ James Oldham, 'The Work of Ryder and Murray as Law Officers of the Crown', in Thomas G. Watkin (ed.), *Legal Record and Historical Reality: Proceedings of the Eighth British Legal History Conference, Cardiff 1987* (London, 1989), 157.

⁷ David Lemmings, 'Ryder, Sir Dudley (1691-1756), judge', *ODNB* (published online 21 May 2009) <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-24394> (accessed 21 January 2018). See also William Matthews (ed.), *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715-1716* (London, 1939).

diary to ‘mark down every day whatever occurs to me in the day worth observing’, in order to ‘observe my own temper and state of mind as to my fitness and disposition for study or the easiness or satisfaction it finds within itself ... It will help me to know myself better ... I shall know ... what is most likely to make me easy and contented’.⁸ This was a diary used for Ryder’s self-improvement and self-knowledge. He recorded his reading, his interactions with peers in coffeehouses, and his concerns over his relationships. He recorded attending sermons and offered critique, sometimes accompanied with some spiritual introspection. In the transcript of the diary held by the Harrowby Manuscripts, totalling 350,000 words, there does not appear to be one mention of ‘providence’: a conspicuous absence in the context of such a deeply personal diary by an individual educated in a godly community.⁹

There appeared to be little scope for using this diary to understand the subjective experience of providentialism. But the findings of this thesis have encouraged a reconsideration of Ryder’s diary. While he has not referred to ‘providence’ and made little use of the typical language of providentialism described in this thesis, there are indications that he was employing an idea of providence similar to that of Edmund Harrold. For example, in July 1715 he wrote,

Sunday July 3 1715 after reading ‘in family’ an exposition by Mr Matthew Henry. Henry showed what a necessary duty it was to ‘trust confidence in God in an all circumstances of life ...’ ... I am resolved by the grace of God to bring myself into this temper to subdue every uneasy thought every anxious care and fretful disposition to make the will of God the rule of my behaviour and be easy and contented in whatever outward condition god places me believing that that is best for me which the wise good and powerful god appoints for me. Thus shall all distracting cares, perplexing fears and doubts be shut out of my

⁸ H. MSS, volume 69A, ‘Transcription from the Shorthand Journal of Dudley Ryder, 1715-16’, 1.

⁹ Matthews, *Dudley Ryder*, vii.

breast and I shall have that within me that will be a constant and perpetual spring of joy and delight in every state.¹⁰

This is an example of Ryder exercising providentialism, because he cites God's will as determining the condition in which he was placed. He intended, just as Harrold did to resign himself to God's will, to 'be easy and contented'. What this shows is that a self-writer of the generation born in the 1690s was exercising a belief in providence, that this exercise was involving and provoking feeling and informing a sense of self, because as Ryder wrote, he would have the sense of God's will 'within [him] that will be a constant'.

This example suggests that the findings of this thesis – that the subjective nature of providentialism allowed individuals to adapt and use it – can help us recognise how providentialism changed beyond the scope of 'typical' language, and that it could be found in sources that might otherwise be dismissed as irrelevant. Doing so would quickly expand the representation of voices in our understanding of providentialism in the early modern and modern periods. For example, it might be used to incorporate the contemporary experiences of Catholic self-writers so that a fuller picture of English providentialism is achieved, because as Lake and Questier have observed, 'Catholics had frequent recourse to providential reading of events both to justify the rightness of their own cause and to deny that of their heretical Protestant opponents'.¹¹ While this thesis has focussed squarely on the experience of Protestants, it is encouraging to consider that an appreciation of subjective experience of providentialism may open up further avenues of inquiry. Doing so would widen our

¹⁰ H. MSS, Vol. 69A, 17.

¹¹ Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (London, 2002), 322-23.

understanding of how individuals made sense of their world and how they viewed themselves in it.

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