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Motherhood and poverty in eighteenth-century Aberdeen

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*The Direction of the Food, Cloaths and other Necessaries for the Persons of Children falls to the Mother's share during at least their State of Infancy if not during all their Childhood and frequently longer, in which one ought principally to consider their Health and Strength and assistance must be had from those of Skill and Experience.*¹

This was advice on how to be a good mother – dating from the 1740s – given by an educated middle-class doctor to his teenage daughter. In a series of letters, the concerned father discussed not only the merits of good parenting but also a variety of other subjects of concern to an affluent young woman in the eighteenth century.² The correspondence constituted a manual of behaviour not unique at this time in Scotland. But this example is striking in its content and scope.

In the late twentieth century advice to mothers comes not only from their parents and from other mothers, but also from government agencies, from health professionals, and – unceasingly it can seem – from the

media. There are shops, magazines, and self-help organisations meeting the specific needs of mothers and children. Mothers, moreover, are made virtually into icons of social continuity, and this has its reverse side. It is on the mother that much-publicised critics place much of the responsibility for many social problems: were she to be at home more, it is suggested, there would be less youth vandalism and children would learn better at school and have a better start in life. The list of community problems laid at the feet of mothers can seem endless. In contemporary Britain, furthermore, the perception of single mothers as a financial drain on society is much encouraged. The idea of the intrinsic social worth of mothers thus has an equally powerful negative side to it. In this chapter I shall address the question of how particular forms of such an interpretation of maternity operated – and with what effects for mothers – in eighteenth-century Scotland. I shall focus on the experiences of those mothers whose situation brought them into the orbit of the Poor Law.

I

Eighteenth-century Aberdeen provides a good base for the study of motherhood in poverty. Many of the original records of the period have survived, including some uniquely valuable for the study of poverty. In 1755 the population of the city, according to Webster's analysis, was 16,027;³ and by the end of the century it had risen dramatically to 24,493.⁴ This increase was reflected in the quantity of records produced. The city's administration was growing as well as its physical and geographical size. In the middle of the century two large institutions opened which reflected a growth of concern about the poor of the town – the Infirmary and the Poor's Hospital. Both of these organisations were administered by the town and its male establishment, and both were funded by voluntary means.⁵ The records for both institutions have survived, and they help us to construct a reasonably full life of the poor in Aberdeen from the 1740s onwards, especially when used in conjunction with contemporary church, newspaper, and legal records.⁶

One of the main problems with any study of women's history, however, is the lack of available sources written by women themselves. The difficulty is compounded when the object of study is poor women, where analysis must necessarily be based on second-hand reports. Middle-class males, indeed, generated every source consulted for this chapter, and this is reflected in what these sources tell us. For example, in one year in the 1740s, ten times as many detailed records for the male patients as for fe-

males survive in the Infirmary records, yet there were only twice as many male patients.⁷ Gender, then, was a major factor accounting for the records which were kept, and which have survived. And so too was social status: while there are some detailed records for the fee-paying female patients, very little about poor women has survived – if indeed it ever existed.

Scotland in the eighteenth century was a country in transition. The population structure was changing, new work practices were developing, and there were increasing numbers of poor. The poor relief system which had to cope with this problem was evolving from a church-based one to one which involved a partnership between the church and the civil authorities, but with the church still predominant. Funds for distribution to the poor came from a variety of sources – in the main, fines, bequests, individual donations, investment income, and, of course, church collections. The award of relief to the “deserving poor” was the task of the kirk session,⁸ which judged which applicants were worthy and in real need. Institutional care, in the form of workhouses and infirmaries, was becoming a principal means of dealing with the poor. Both the problems and their solutions, then, were becoming increasingly visible.

This was especially true in the towns. The recipients of charity were looked on, essentially, as the weak and the sick of society. In Scotland the able-bodied unemployed had traditionally been excluded from receiving any sort of public help. They could be, and sometimes were, arrested for not having any gainful employment. One *Instruction to the Part-time Constables* of Aberdeen in 1657 urged the arrest of “all idle persons who have no means to live upon and will not betake themselves to some trade”.⁹ It went on to declare that “all [those] guilty of slaughter, murder and theft” were also to be arrested, making little apparent distinction in the severity of these crimes and “idleness”.

How, then, were motherhood and mothers perceived, according to the records of eighteenth-century Aberdeen? The women under examination in this chapter were all involved in the poor relief system to some extent. It is perhaps surprising to note that many of these women were not those who would traditionally be thought of as “the poor”. Some were middle-class women who no longer had a male protector and had arrived at a point at which they needed help from the system. It is clear that social class and status were important in determining that they were helped, and the extent of the funds they received. With regard to mothers particularly, the system recognised six main categories. These were: unmarried mothers; widowed mothers; deserted mothers; mothers of aban-

doned children; mothers-to-be; and foster-mothers. All received help, but in differing degrees. A detailed examination of each group will enable a better understanding of attitudes at the time to mothers and to poverty.

II

The unmarried mother is the category most likely to appear in the archives – especially in the records of the kirk sessions of the Church of Scotland. These church courts were the first official recourse for those in need of relief; they had a fascination with what one might call the juicier details of the lives of parishioners. Their records are often more lurid than the columns of the more sensational tabloid newspapers today: there is scarcely a page without some scandalous story of sexual misdemeanour. But as the century progressed, there were fewer of these cases recorded. It has been suggested that the number of illegitimate pregnancies was declining but there does not appear to be historical evidence for this. The city's population was growing – as we have seen by thirty per cent between the 1750s and the end of the century. It is statistically probable that there were more illegitimate births, yet the number of women brought before the sessions for this reason remained static or even declined.¹⁰ In 1757, for example, there were seventeen cases; in 1797, only two.¹¹ The decline is difficult to explain. Perhaps there were fewer unplanned pregnancies between unmarried people, or it may have been that the sessions were more involved in other matters and that they were less concerned with the problems of the unmarried mothers of the parish.

Unmarried mothers were likely to appear in the records not just because they required financial help but also because of their moral “fall from grace”. About a third of the unmarried mothers who were compeared (or called) before the session in Aberdeen in the middle of the century were also compeared before the Justice Court of the town. The mothers were being punished twice for one and the same “crime” of ante-nuptial fornication. There is no obvious reason why certain of the cases, but not others, were tried before the civil courts as well. A typical entry in the Justice Court book simply states:

5th September 1763

Agnes Strachan servant to Richard Wallace Plumber in Aberdeen was guilty of uncleanness with David Ross son to John Ross Merchant.¹²

This incident had occurred at the end of the previous March, and Agnes

Strachan was now pregnant. The records, incidentally, also note that both the parties involved could write.

The women always suffered more than the men involved in the case. Their crime was more obvious, especially after about six months when their pregnancy began to show. For the session the main problem with these cases was not so much the moral implications, more the financial implications. Who would pay for the upbringing of the child? The session members preferred it to be anyone other than the session itself: they sought to minimise any burden on the church's poor relief fund.

The session records constitute something of a documentary commentary on the sexual and social mores of the time. All the mothers mentioned were from the working classes, but hardly any of the fathers were. Listed as fathers were merchants, lawyers, ship's captains. But the main occupation of the mothers – if any were recorded at all – was that of servant. The occupation of the mother was not always considered relevant: the father's would, if nothing else, give some indication of ability to pay.

Another question that needs to be considered is why no middle-class women were brought before the session? Did no middle-class girls fall pregnant outwith marriage? Was there, within middle-class circles, more of a stigma attached to pregnancy before marriage or was it more that girls from such a background had far less freedom? Or was it simply that they, or their families, were able to maintain the child, and that, therefore, the session did not have to face the financial implications of an unwanted child? Although in many of the cases the session would appear to have been mainly concerned with the financial problems caused by illegitimate children, in certain cases there was more to their interest. What those other points of interest were can be deduced from examining some cases with particularly serious – even sinister – overtones.

The local newspaper of the middle to late eighteenth century was the *Aberdeen Journal*, which started production as a weekly in 1747. Almost from its outset, this paper carried certain advertisements that might be more properly called "wanted notices". These appeared quite regularly throughout the later eighteenth century – inserted by sessions trying to find women who had disappeared from their parish. The session believed that the disappearing woman was pregnant and that she had run away because of her pregnancy. A worthwhile exercise would be the reconstitution of the lives of these hunted women to discover the lengths the church went to find them – although this cannot be systematically done here. A typical example of this type of announcement, however, dated 13 June 1758, reads:

Upon Wednesday last Rachel Anderson of the parish of Tarland ... eloped.¹³ Low stature, twenty years of age, pale complexion'd, brown hair'd, pox pitted, her nose is a little flat, her chin somewhat thin. She wore a blue gown with green manikie cuffs and a stript petticoat...¹⁴

The reward for information leading to the apprehension of Rachel Anderson was one guinea, payable by the minister of the parish from the session's funds. In effect, sessions put a price on the head of this presumably distraught woman, rather as sheriffs did with outlaws in the American "wild west". It is an indication of how seriously such cases might be taken. What is not clear is whether a session's decision to advertise was dictated more by financial or moral considerations. Such pressures on an already troubled woman must have placed an almost intolerable strain her. The *Aberdeen Journal* of 12 February 1760 announced that

last week an unmarried woman was taken ... on suspicion of child murder ... [and] sent under guard to Forfar ... [A] body was found in the links buried in a hole in the sand ... [and] she made ample confession.¹⁵

It is not surprising to find that women with an ante-nuptial pregnancy would go to great lengths to hide their condition – and *in extremis* might resort to infanticide.¹⁶

The session would not consider the case to be complete until it had discovered the name of the father. This was one of the fundamental facts that the elders wanted established from the outset of their investigations, because it was paramount in deciding who would pay for the child's upkeep. In one particularly disturbing case a woman was hounded for four years, and was compeared before the session seventeen times, in the attempt to get her to state the name of the father. The young woman, whose elderly husband had recently died, was from the parish of Newhills on the outskirts of Aberdeen. At first she gave evidence that the baby was the product of her having been raped on her way home and that she could not identify the rapist. She was not believed. For years the saga continued, with the elders eventually excommunicating the woman for two years until she named the father. Possibly, in this particular case, the elders knew something not in the records which made them certain the woman was lying, and was therefore, in their eyes, deserving of the indignities to which they subjected her. In any event, the woman eventually confessed that the father was her late husband's son – her own step-

son – who was closer in age to her than her husband had been.¹⁷

The most tragic cases of all are those of unmarried mothers where the child had been found dead. It could have been stillborn, abandoned at birth, or, worst of all, murdered. The newspapers carry many accounts of children thrown down wells, left on hillsides, or even eaten by dogs. For example, in January 1758:

Last week a new born child had been thrown into the water in the parish of Kildrummy.... [It] was found half-eaten by dogs ... [and] the perpetrators of the crime were being looked for....¹⁸

One of the most notorious cases in eighteenth-century Aberdeen, moreover, made it into the *Black Kalendar*.¹⁹ In the early 1750s, in the West-End district of Rubislaw, a young servant girl, Christian Phren, was found guilty of murder and hanged in the Castlegate for her crime. She had burnt her newly delivered baby in the fireplace of her master's house. Her defence was that the baby had been born dead and that she had been cremating its remains. Her crime was compounded because she had concealed her pregnancy, and was therefore held to be guilty of subterfuge, as well as being convicted of murder.²⁰ Concealment in itself was indeed considered criminal. A report of 8 January 1760 recounts that:

On Friday se'ennight an unmarried woman ... [was] delivered on the hill of two children ... [She] did not abandon them ... [but] crawled a mile with them to a house ... [and has] since cared for them. The solitary manner of her Delivery ... owing to an Accident rather than design ... [came about because she had] concealed the pregnancy prior to the birth ...²¹

And the crime of hiding a pregnancy was one that the sessions tried to combat by using the midwives of the town to report on pregnancies and births. They also, when an infant was found abandoned, might examine any likely women to see if any of them were producing milk. The fact that women like Christian Phren hid their pregnancy and resorted to murder showed the lengths to which some women felt constrained to go, in order to keep their jobs and to keep out of the poor relief system.

III

The second category of mother in the poor relief records is the widowed mother. The status of these mothers was much higher than that of the unmarried mother, and society apparently felt it owed these women

some support. They had conformed to normal life-patterns and were down on their luck through no fault of their own. Therefore, unless they were involved in some moral misdemeanour, their treatment was less harsh than that of the unmarried mother. In many cases widowed mothers appearing in the records were of a higher social status. Poor widowed mothers obtained relief both from the kirk session and as outpensioners of the Poor's Hospital, in much the same way as unmarried mothers. They were always designated "Widow ..."; this indication of marital status remained the form used in poor relief documentation into the twentieth century. Many charities were also established to help better-off widows. In the 1740s, there were over twenty widows in Aberdeen receiving relief from the mortifications of the town. The status of the widow – especially the widowed mother – was attended by an aura of responsibility, and of respectability, which attracted social prestige, with which went recognition of the right to poor relief. In every Poor Law act from the sixteenth century onwards, widows were mentioned as being amongst the worthiest recipients of relief. However, there were still moral overtones to this charity; and moral strictures applied to the recipient women. Many of the mortification and trust funds set up for widows stated that the money was to be given to "those widowes that have beine the wyffes of burgesses of Aberdeine ... of good lyfe and conversations, frie of anie publict scandle, or offence".²²

The third group of mothers comprised those deserted by their husbands who found it difficult to bring up their children without male support. In the nineteenth century, petitions for divorce to the Court of Session indicate increasing numbers of women being deserted by husbands, who had departed for the Americas or other far-flung regions and had never returned.²³ Some men had perhaps emigrated to create a better life for themselves and their families, but had either died in the attempt or had ignored the fact that they had left a family in Scotland. After seven years the women were able to apply to the Court of Session for a divorce which was usually granted. In the eighteenth century the main types of desertion varied, but most were the result of outside agencies. The majority of deserted wives recorded had husbands who were in the military, with no choice as to where they were posted. The kirk sessions would often allocate money to the wives to go and join their husbands. For example there was the case of

Isobell Gaull daughter of the deceased James Gaull sometime Wheelwright in Elgin, and now spouse to Robert McAndrew late

Glover in Elgin and one of the Out Chelsea pensioners, presently in ... the Island of Jersey ... [who made] humble application ... for ... a small pittance ... towards Enabling me for Setting out for, and arriveing at the Said Island of Jersey.²⁴

To accede to such a request would have been cheaper for the session than continuing to pay for the family *ad infinitum*, and, as we have seen, financial expediency was always a consideration for the sessions. Obviously, the number of deserted wives fluctuated with the political and military situation. Unmarried mothers could also fall into this category. The claim that the father of an illegitimate child was now in the army could be difficult to disprove.

V

The fourth category of mothers to be considered is mothers-to-be. Attitudes towards pregnancy in the eighteenth century were different from those today. There was a midwife for the labour, but no expectation of care before the birth. The more affluent might consult a doctor before the birth for confirmation of the pregnancy, but the poor, for the most part, saw no reason to visit a doctor or midwife until delivery was imminent. For the poor, having a child was an exclusively female experience: the child would be delivered by a midwife, a respected local woman, or a female relative who had some experience of birth. Male doctors were not involved.

In the 1760s, a ward for poor lying-in women was established in Aberdeen as part of an extension to the Infirmary. But the women of Aberdeen scarcely used the facility, and in the short period of its existence only a handful of women were delivered there. The Infirmary also employed a midwife to deliver women in their own homes. This could have been an important period in the history of midwifery in Aberdeen. Not only was a ward for lying-in women established but a training programme for midwives had also been started. Yet all this came to nothing because of the premature death of the pioneering physician, Dr David Skene.²⁵ Pregnancy was a potentially fatal experience for many women. So much could go wrong and so much did. A vivid example was the epidemic of puerperal fever (popularly known as childbed fever), which occurred in Aberdeen in the 1790s, spread by the lack of hygiene among the midwives and the doctors delivering the women.²⁶ But poor women were not willing to change the practice of childbirth. Most children were

born at home. The new mothers surrounded by other women, a practice they wanted to continue. The poor lying-in ward was not used. And an offer by Skene to pay for the care of the pregnant poor attracted little interest.

Skene's papers have survived. There are no references to cases involving poor women, but there are over ninety sets of case-notes for more affluent ones – the wives and daughters of some of the petty gentry around Aberdeen.²⁷ One of the most interesting features of these records is the age of the mother at first pregnancy. Most were in their late twenties, and there were no teenage pregnancies. Women in this class would appear to be marrying, and having their children, later. Can this model of family life be applied also to the poor? Was late marriage a method of limiting the size of families? The age of marriage in Scotland has always been regarded as being one of the latest in Europe and as having failed to become earlier in the way it did in England and elsewhere in Europe.²⁸ Most women would have married by the age of twenty-five. The fertility cycle of women was shorter than now. In the eighteenth century, malnutrition, high rates of death in childbirth, and later marriage ages meant that the fertile period within wedlock was much shorter.²⁹ Life expectancy then also meant that to be forty was to be considered elderly.

VI

The fifth category identified in the records is the mother who abandoned her child or children. There were two main types in this group: the mother who permanently abandoned her child, and who did not want to be found; and the mother who temporarily abandoned the child but maintained some tenuous contact. Children who were permanently abandoned, the foundlings, were placed in foster care and were provided for from the funds of the Poor's Hospital. An example is reported in the *Aberdeen Journal* in March 1759:

Thursday night there a female child two or three days old laid down at a door in the Guest row [row]. Poor infant immediately cared for and put to nurse ... the unnatural mother not yet discovered ...³⁰

Mothers of abandoned children were always described as either unnatural or inhuman. Most of the babies were placed in homes on the outskirts of Aberdeen where the rural environment afforded healthier conditions. Attempts were made to trace the mothers but in most of the cases they

was unsuccessful. Normally the child was given the surname "Aberdeen", so that this became a distinguishing feature of an abandoned baby. Another was its short life span: very few of these babies survived to adulthood, most died as infants. The child-mortality rate was in any case high, but it was highest amongst the abandoned. As to mothers who abandoned their children later in life, there is more in the records. In these cases the mother's name and her personal circumstances were known, as well as her stated reasons for placing her child, or children, in the workhouse. Usually it was because they could no longer afford to pay for their children's upkeep. In some cases it was because they were now in a second marriage, and the new husband would not maintain the children of the previous family. The town council guaranteed to keep the children until they were of an age either to go out to work or to be apprenticed: twelve for the girls and fourteen for the boys. In most cases the girls would be found a job in domestic service, while the boys were apprenticed to some trade. There was one case in Aberdeen where the mother did not return for her child when she came of age. The town council repeatedly wrote to her. This correspondence continued for a year, until the town threatened the recalcitrant mother with legal proceedings.³¹ Their legal case, however, was not that she refused to take her child out of the house, but rather that she had abandoned her eleven years earlier.

The final type of mother recovered from the records was the foster mother – those who cared for some of the abandoned children of the Aberdeen. These foster parents were paid for by the town council from private charity. They appear regularly in the records of the Poor's Hospital. Most of the foster mothers lived on the outskirts of the city. The money for the care of the child was paid, not to the mother herself, but to the couple. Specific monies were allocated for the infant's clothing and shoes. Often the wife would also act as wet nurse.³²

~~XI~~

In the sixteenth century, John Knox, in his *History of the Reformation*, listed those that he thought should be helped by the church as "the widow and the fatherless, the aged, impotent or lamed.... And ... also ... all persons of honesty fallen into decay and penury."³³ By the eighteenth century, these worthy sentiments had been replaced by more pragmatic considerations. Mothers were a focus of attention for a number of practical reasons. They had difficulty working because of childcare problems. Without the sup-

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port of a man, they had little chance of earning enough to live on and fulfil their maternal responsibilities. Even if earning, they usually received one-third to one-half of a male breadwinner's wage, and so were much less able to support a family. Force of such circumstances demanded of the authorities that they pay attention to the plight of poor mothers.

But it is not true – and this is a preconception which has persisted right up to the present in the ideas about social security referred to at the beginning of this chapter – that women were the main recipients of poor relief. Commentators continuously make this assumption, and it informs the theory behind all the relevant parliamentary acts. Yet when gender-differentiated calculations are made, it becomes clear that more men were in receipt of relief than women and that the men received proportionately larger amounts of relief. Women most often were helped only when they were also responsible for children, and they were also frequently subjected to moral stipulations. For eighteenth-century Scottish women, motherhood at least meant that, if they fell into poverty, they had a greater chance of being eligible for relief than other women. But they still got less in relief than a man in a comparable position. Only a much more consistent attitude by Scottish historians to the gendering of the story of their country's past will allow the full implications of such facts to emerge. And only then will it be possible to give its proper weight to the history of motherhood – which plays such a key role in social ideology (and mythology) – and to place that history firmly in its broader historical context.

NOTES

1. Alexander Monro (Primus), "The professor's daughter: an essay on female conduct", in *Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, January 1996, vol. 26, no. 1, supplement 2. This edition was transcribed with an introduction and notes by P. A. G. Monro, a descendant of the author. The letters that the Essay are based on were written from 1739–1746, when the daughter was twelve till she was nineteen. As part of her education Monro (primus) made Margaret, his daughter copy the text out twice and he corrected any mistakes.
2. Subjects covered include – the Education of Girls, general Conduct of Life, Commerce with Men, Government of servants, the management of Children, a Summary of religion, and the Origins of Government. The text of Monro's essay fills over 170 pages.
3. J. G. Kyd (ed.), *Scottish Population Statistics including Webster's analysis of*

- population 1755 (Edinburgh, 1952), p. 51.
4. D. J. Withrington and I. R. Grant (eds), *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. XIV (Wakefield, 1982), p. 293.
 5. Both of these organisations opened to the public in the early 1740s. Further information can be found in A. Walker, *The History of the Workhouse or Poor's Hospital of Aberdeen from 1739–1818* (Aberdeen, 1885); I. Levack and H. Dudley, *Aberdeen Royal Infirmary: the People's Hospital in the North East* (Aberdeen, 1992); Lesley Diack, "A woman's greatest adventure: the development of maternity care in Aberdeen since the eighteenth century", in T. Brotherstone and D. J. Withrington (eds), *The City and its Worlds* (Glasgow, 1996).
 6. The records of the Church and of the Poor's Hospital are held in Aberdeen District Archive (ADA) and the records of the Infirmary are held by Northern Health Services Archive (NHSA). The *Aberdeen Journal* was first published in 1747.
 7. NHSA, GRHB 1/1/2, Minute Book of the Infirmary 1742–1751.
 8. The kirk session was the lowest level of the church court in Scotland it was based at a parish level and constituted the minister as moderator with the rest of the elders as the members. Their remit was to deal with discipline, poor relief, and other less important business.
 9. ADA, Justice Court Book vol. 1, 1657–1688.
 10. ADA, CH2/448/35, CH2/448/42, The Kirk Session records of St Nicholas.
 11. In 1757 six of the cases were brought before the Justice Court for discipline as well.
 12. ADA, Justice Court Book, vol. IV, 1690–1783.
 13. "Eloped" meant simply "ran away".
 14. *Aberdeen Journal*. It later transpired that Rachel had been accused of child murder and that was probably why she disappeared.
 15. *Aberdeen Journal*. This case comes from the parish of Montrose some forty miles to the south of Aberdeen. These types of cases always appeared in the Domestic Occurrences columns of the newspaper. These columns now roughly equate to the Births, Deaths and Marriages in the newspapers of today.
 16. In Scotland, from 1690, there was a legal presumption that a woman concealing an unmarried pregnancy was guilty of murder if the infant should die. The last execution under this statute was in 1776, whereafter the sentence was more likely to be banishment. The law was not changed until 1809, when the penalty was changed from death to two years imprisonment. See R. Mitchison and L. Leneman, *Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland 1660–1780* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 200–230; and John Burnett, *A Treatise on Various Branches of the Criminal Law in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1811), pp. 571–575.
 17. Scottish Record Office (SRO), CH2/280/1, The Kirk Session records of Newhills. The first reference to this case is on the 16th September 1711. Mar-

garet Tait, widow of William Walker was excommunicated from 26th October to 3rd October 1714. The last reference to Margaret Tait and her stepson, James Walker was on the 1st May 1715.

18. *Aberdeen Journal*.
19. James Bruce, *The Black Kalendar of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1840).
20. SRO, JC 11/17 Northern Circuit Book of the High Court of Justiciary Minutes, 7 October 1752. Christian Phren was accused of parricide and child murder and convicted on five counts: that she had brought forth a child; that she had concealed a pregnancy; that she had no assistance at the birth; that the child was found dead; and that she had placed the child in the fire.
21. *Aberdeen Journal*.
22. *Mortification Accounts*. The reference to "good ... conversations" meant that they should not be guilty of scandal mongering or gossiping.
23. SRO, CS
24. Moray District Archives (MDA), CH2/145/10, The Kirk Session records of Elgin, 1733–1770. In the period 1741–1751 only five mothers were given money to join their husbands in the records of St Nicholas in Aberdeen (CH2/448/35).
25. Dr David Skene (1730–1771) was instrumental in the allocating of space for poor lying-in women in the extension to the Infirmary in 1758. Further information on Skene can be found in H. Lesley Diack, "Dr David Skene and his contribution to women's health", in A. Adam, D. Smith & F. Watson (eds), *To the greit support and advancement of helth* (Aberdeen, 1996).
26. Further information can be found in Diack, "A woman's greatest adventure".
27. AULSC, MS 476.
28. The information on population and marriage ages was supplied by Mr R. E. Tyson of the Department of History at the University of Aberdeen. It is as yet unpublished.
29. Recent research on anorexia has shown that women have to be of a certain weight before they will have periods and therefore healthy enough to be producing eggs. This has been applied to the "historical period" by E. Le Roy Ladurie, "Famine amenorrhoea, seventeenth to twentieth centuries", in R. Forster and O. Ranum (eds), *Biology of Man in History* (Baltimore, 1975).
30. *Aberdeen Journal*.
31. ADA, Town Council Records.
32. ADA, Poor's Hospital Ledger Books.
33. John Knox, *History of the Reformation*, vol. II (Edinburgh, 1949) pp. 290–291.