

**The early modern demographic dynamic: celibates and celibacy in
seventeenth-century England**

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Hull

by

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Contents

Conventions	i
List of Figures	ii
List of Tables	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The relative importance of celibacy in early modern historical demography	10
I. A brief historiography of demographic thought	12
II. The role of mortality	16
III. The role of fertility	32
IV. Summary	55
Chapter Two: The discourse of marriage	57
I. The discourse and society	58
II. The discourse and the individual	69
III. The significance of marriage in contemporary culture	86
IV. Summary	97
Chapter Three: Economic, social and cultural influences on marriage behaviour	99
I. The role of insufficient resources	102
II. The role of social control	113
III. The role of sex imbalances	117
IV. The role of choice	129
V. Summary	149
Chapter Four: Celibacy and sexuality	153
I. Celibacy and procreative intercourse	155
II. Problems of measurement	169
III. The regulation of procreative intercourse	177

IV.	Alternative sexual practices	192
V.	Summary	204
Chapter Five: Celibacy in context		208
I.	Celibacy as a lifecycle phenomenon	209
II.	Celibacy and economic opportunity	214
III.	Celibacy, family and inheritance	227
IV.	Celibacy and residential opportunity	232
V.	Celibacy, adulthood and social status	237
VI.	Summary	252
Conclusion		254
Appendices		
I.	The sample	261
II.	The problem with spinsters	274
III.	The use of household listings	283
IV.	Sundry tables	
	Table A4.1	286
	Table A4.2	289
	Table A4.3	291
	Table A4.4	292
	Table A4.5	292
	Table A4.6	293
	Table A4.7	294
	Table A4.8	294
V.	Cheshire sample	295
VI.	Lincolnshire female sample	306
VII.	Lincolnshire male sample	313
VIII.	Author table	322
Bibliography		326

Conventions

All dates used in the course of the dissertation are rendered in modern format, so that the year is taken to begin on January 1st and not March 25th, as was the case until 1752.

Quotations taken from manuscripts and printed works retain their original spelling and punctuation, except for the fact that the early modern inversions of “u” for “v” and “i” for “j” have been replaced with their more readable twenty-first century equivalents, and “th” has been substituted for “y” where appropriate. In addition, to avoid confusion, any abbreviations included in the texts have been fully expanded. The spelling of names in probate material has been transcribed directly from the text, although place names have been modernised wherever possible.

Biblical quotations are all taken from the authorised King James version of 1611.

The place of publication is London unless otherwise stated, and all volumes of the *Economic History Review* are from the second series.

Monetary values are rendered as pre-decimal pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d). Please note that each pound was divided into twenty shillings, and each shilling was worth twelve pence. It is difficult to translate seventeenth century monetary values into modern equivalents, but by way of a rough guide, values should be multiplied by around seven hundred to give some idea of the relative modern amount. This has been calculated on the basis that labourers in Hull earned on average 10d. (4p.) per day during the seventeenth century. (See D. Woodward, *Men at work: Labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (1995), 283). A man working for eight hours at the minimum wage of £3.70 per hour today would take home £29.60 per day, in monetary terms over seven hundred times as much. (Figure for minimum wage supplied courtesy of the Citizens Advice Bureau).

List of Figures

- 1 The combined effect of English fertility and mortality changes in determining intrinsic growth rates 1551-1861 (five-point moving averages of quinquennial data). 38

List of Tables

1.1	Crisis months in 404 parishes per 1, 000 months observed by quarter century.	23
1.2	Crude mean death rates per decade (per 1, 000 total population), 1600-1699.	25
1.3	Expectation of life at birth for males and females combined, 1600-1699.	26
1.4	Expectation of life at age thirty from twelve reconstitutions.	27
1.5	Subsequent fecundity of wives at given ages between 1538 and 1837.	44
1.6	Trends in birth intervals at all parities except parity 0 (the interval between marriage and birth of the first child) 1600-1699, where the earlier child survives infancy (in months).	45
1.7	Mean age at birth of last child in years (bachelor and spinster completed marriages only).	46
1.8	Estimated proportions of people never marrying by cohort (per 1, 000 aged 40-44 in England).	51
1.9	Recorded illegitimacy in England, 1601-1700.	54
3.1	Proportional spread of debts in percentages in the probate documents of Cheshire and Lincolnshire single females, 1601-1700.	139
3.2	Proportion of Cheshire single women involved in lending, 1601-1700.	140
3.3	Proportion of Lincolnshire single women involved in lending, 1601-1700.	140
3.4	Comparisons of the mean inventories of single men in Lincolnshire and single women in Lincolnshire and Cheshire between the periods 1601-10 and 1691-1700 (excluding debts and leases).	143
5.1	Details of livestock held by Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.	224

5.2	Access of singles in Lincolnshire and Cheshire to land and livestock as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.	225
5.3	Number of Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles with access to land as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.	231
A4.1	Details of status appended to the single men's probate documents consulted in the course of the project.	286
A4.2	Details of status appended to the single women's probate documents consulted in the course of the project.	289
A4.3	Details of the occupations of some Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.	291
A4.4	Relative status and proportions of single women over twenty-five years of age in Ealing (1599), Chilvers Coton (1684) and Lichfield (1695).	292
A4.5	Relative status and proportions of single men over twenty-seven years of age in Ealing (1599), Chilvers Coton (1684) and Lichfield (1695).	292
A4.6	Crude average birth and death rates per decade (per 1, 000 population), 1600-1699.	293
A4.7	Place of residence of Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles, as revealed in probate documents, 1601-1700.	294
A4.8	Number of Lincolnshire and Cheshire single women with access to land and capital as indicated in probate inventories, 1601-1700.	294

Introduction

Marriage, during the Tudor and Stuart periods, has been, and continues to be, the subject of a vast amount of literature. Celibacy, on the other hand, has drawn relatively little historical attention.¹ In many ways, such a bias is understandable. Marriage formed the basic economic, social and political unit of early modern society, the estate through which goods were produced and consumed, children educated and nurtured and young people trained and supervised appropriate to their gender and status. Moreover, a reading of the contemporary literature suggests that the institution of marriage enjoyed quasi-universal acceptance: only a minority of individuals apparently lived out their days without ever having entered its boundaries.

Since the 1980s, however, it has been apparent that rates of marriage fluctuated dramatically over the course of the early modern period in general, and over the Tudor and Stuart periods in particular. Estimates of the proportion of those ever marrying suggest that numbers entered into a pattern of decline during the later sixteenth century that was not arrested until almost a century later.² Yet despite such revelations, there has been little academic scholarship on the subject of celibacy in the intervening decades. Within the confines of historical demography there have been a number of attempts to isolate the factors that were instrumental in eliciting lower rates of marriage, on the grounds that the rising proportion of the never-marrieds offers the most probable explanation for the demographic stagnation of the seventeenth century. But by failing to investigate shifts in the nature and extent of celibacy from a more holistic perspective, historians have also failed to appreciate the overall impact of a rise in the proportion of lifelong celibates on the economy, society and culture of Tudor and Stuart England.

This particular historical oversight has greater pertinence when considered in terms of the relative significance of celibacy both in the lifecycle of the individual, and the structure of the community. Given that the average expectation of life at birth ranged between twenty-eight and forty during the Tudor and Stuart periods, and first marriage did not occur on average until a woman had reached the age of twenty-six

¹ The term “celibacy” can be used to describe a period of abstinence from sexual intercourse. In this thesis, however, the term is used in its most literal form to denote the state of not being (and not having been) married.

and a man that of twenty-eight, many individuals were likely to have spent a greater proportion of their life in the state of celibacy than they did in that of marriage.³ A large percentage of the general population in any one community, who in addition would have been physically and sexually, if not socially, mature, were then likely to have been celibate at any one time: in the rural community of Ealing in Middlesex in 1599, for example, forty per cent of women and fifty per cent of men aged sixteen and over were single; in the more proto-industrialised community of Chilvers Coton in Warwickshire in 1684 the figures were slightly lower, standing at thirty-two per cent and thirty-three per cent respectively; eleven years later in the town of Lichfield in Staffordshire, as in Ealing almost a century earlier, around forty percent of women aged sixteen and over were unmarried, but the comparative figure for men on this occasion was nearer to that of Chilvers Coton, standing at thirty-two per cent.⁴

That marriage appears as the *sine qua non* of early modern life, both in contemporary literature and modern analysis, is a reflection of the strength of the marriage discourse in the Tudor and Stuart periods, and its ability to engage with the individual at every level of society. The use of the term “discourse” is most frequently associated with the work of Michel Foucault, who defined discourses at their most basic level as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”.⁵ A discursive structure in Foucauldian terms can be detected because of the orderly ways in which ideas, opinions and concepts are formed within a certain context in an attempt to promote the validity of one social message above another. Thus the effect of a discourse is to structure reality and inform notions of identity on the basis of what is *held* to be true: Foucault argued that truth in this understanding

² E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871 A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981; paperback ed., Cambridge, 1989), Table 7.28, 260.

³ E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen and R.S. Schofield (hereafter Wrigley et al.), *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837* (Cambridge, 1997), Figure 6.21, 295; Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.15, 230; *ibid.*, 255; Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 149.

⁴ K.J. Allison, *An Elizabethan “Census” of Ealing*, Ealing Local History Society Members Papers, 2 (1962); local census listings for Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire, 1684, and Lichfield, Staffordshire, 1695. (The local census listings used in the course of the study were provided by kind permission of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure).

⁵ M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), 49. There is a distinction in the work of Foucault between discourse as a whole, and the many discourses or statements that are produced. Since my intention here was not to enter into the field of discourse analysis, but instead to utilise the concept of the discourse as an analytical device, I have used the notion of the marriage discourse (in the singular) to signify all the ideas, statements, customs and practices that worked together in the Tudor and Stuart periods to promote entry into marriage.

was not an abstract ideal, but something that societies work to produce - "Each society has its regime of truth ... the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth".⁶ Significantly, this "regime of truth" does not emanate from a single source, but is found widely dispersed across the social spectrum, for discursive structures, rather than existing in isolation, interact with each other in an ongoing process of reappraisal and reinforcement. As a result, the ideas they promote become so deeply embedded in the individual and social psyche that they are capable of informing and directing customary practices and legal doctrine at the level of the individual, the community and the institution, allowing the message that is promulgated to become reality.⁷

The significance of the marriage discourse in the Tudor and Stuart periods in terms of the present study is not simply that it validated marriage as an estate that was necessary, desirable and ultimately inevitable, however, but also that it functioned simultaneously to control and direct any notions and practices that ran counter to its success. Discourses, dispersed as they are through all social relations, can prove to be a major source of power, capable not only of producing acceptable forms of behaviour, but in addition of restricting those that are in conflict with the "truth". Thus the discourse of marriage, while generating a set of beliefs, attitudes and practices that functioned to stimulate entry into marriage, acted contemporaneously to restrict those beliefs, attitudes and practices that served to foster an increase in levels of celibacy. That there were exceptions to the discourse is clear, for there were a few conditions under which celibacy could receive social sanction, and even a measure of approbation. But the strength of the challenge in the later seventeenth century clearly exceeded the boundaries within which celibacy was acceptable, causing the discourse to reassert with vigour the individual and social value of marriage, and at the same time develop new ways to identify and exclude those who failed to conform. Moreover, any challenge to the success of the marital discourse could not fail to impact on other discursive structures - in this case that of gender - since dominant discourses interact to provide mutual assistance and support. The concept of the

⁶ Cited in S. Mills, *Discourse* (1997), 18.

⁷ I am much indebted to Keith Nield for his help in the area of discourse theory. See also Mills, *Discourse*, esp. 1-28.

discourse of marriage is therefore the most useful tool of analysis in any discussion of celibacy in the early modern period, and forms the centrepiece around which the study as a whole is focused.

Chapter One begins by locating the rise in celibacy within the demographic context of Tudor and Stuart England. The most prominent feature of population change in the seventeenth century was the stagnation that occurred around 1650, following on as it did from a hundred years of almost uninterrupted national expansion. Though the significance of changes in nuptiality, here defined as patterns in the timing and incidence of marriage, had been a feature of demographic analysis since its inception in the 1660s, the spectre of increased mortality as a result of overpopulation, which was first articulated in the writings of Thomas Malthus at the very end of the eighteenth century, had entered into the history of population change in the nineteenth century and succeeded in capturing the academic high ground. Thus for many years shifts in mortality, largely as a result of variations in patterns of disease, were the dominant interpretative element in explanations of early modern population change. The problem was essentially one of measurement - there was a distinct lack of accurate information on fertility change - and even though the role of fertility was mooted in modern demographic texts from as early as the 1950s, it was not until the 1980s that robust estimates of shifts in fertility became available. Nevertheless the patience of the pro-fertility lobby was amply rewarded: the publication in 1981 of Wrigley and Schofield's first volume on population history revealed the general dominance of fertility movements in directing population change throughout the early modern period.⁸ More significantly in terms of this project however, it revealed that the contraction of the population in the mid-seventeenth century could most realistically be interpreted in terms of a fall in the rate of marriage, revealing celibacy in the process as the demographic dynamic of the Tudor and Stuart periods.

Chapter Two seeks to locate the rise in celibacy in its social context by highlighting the strength of the marriage discourse. In this chapter the discourse of marriage is revealed as a potent force, drawing its ideas and authority from a wide range of spheres of thought, including those of religion, medicine, law, gender and sexuality. By the seventeenth century, shifts in marriage theory, having their origins

in the humanist movement of the early sixteenth century, had raised the profile of marriage above that of celibacy, for the benefit of the individual and also of society at large. In the social arena, marriage gained credibility on account of the fact that it provided units of productive and reproductive activity that were capable of securing inheritance, expanding the numbers of the church and state, and legitimising and controlling sexual desire. In the personal arena, marriage, for women in particular, came to represent the pinnacle of social achievement, since it was understood that entry into it served above all to fulfil their scriptural and biological destiny. To this end social customs and practices developed that detached married people of both sexes from their single counterparts, by linking personal identity, social status and full community participation to the institution of marriage. Moreover, in establishing marriage as a valuable and honourable estate of lifelong dimensions, the discourse encouraged the development of a theory of marital choice, which, if faithfully adopted, could provide the basis for a stable and permanent marital union. Despite demographic evidence of falling marriage rates, therefore, the institution itself appears to have retained a position of considerable power in the contemporary imagination.

Nevertheless, as historical demographers have indicated, there was a rise in the proportion of those who did not marry during the course of the seventeenth century. Chapter Three then seeks to examine existing explanations of marital decline, and in addition offers a further analysis of the roots of change. Current interpretations, heavily influenced by the strength of the marriage discourse, have tended to direct attention towards a number of factors that were likely to discourage entry into marriage, the most common of which appear to have been economic: couples either lacked the financial resources required in the process of setting up and running a new household, or they were prevented from marrying by local officials who feared they would become a burden on the poor rate. Shifts in the sex ratio as a result of migration and emigration, largely occasioned by structural shifts in the economy or death from disease or war, are also a feature of the explanatory framework. But Chapter Three also considers the possibility that a greater number of individuals may have preferred to remain single, a factor that to date has received little historical attention. For there was a discernible broadening of the discussion on the relative merits of marriage versus celibacy in the later seventeenth century, both in the

⁸ See Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 454-84.

religious and the secular spheres, which, when taken alongside an increasing emphasis on the role of marital choice, may have had considerable implications in terms of individual action. Though later seventeenth century concern over falling marriage rates was articulated largely in terms of the increasing preference of men for the state of celibacy, such ideas were themselves a function of discursive understandings of womanhood in which female adult identity was formulated exclusively in terms of marriage and motherhood. Yet single women were equally likely to have provided the dynamic. The inability of historians to conceptualise a shift in female attitudes to celibacy arises in part from their uncritical approach to contemporary ideas about female adulthood, and in part from their belief that women's inferior economic status - at least for the majority of those below the level of the gentry - precluded any serious element of choice. The most novel feature to emerge from this project, therefore, has been the discovery that single women of middling status with access to liquid capital were heavily involved in the process of money-lending for profit. Whereas previous understandings of the labour market have marginalized the role of single women to the point at which economic independence was largely unattainable, the discovery that a considerable number may have had the capacity to maintain an independent existence requires that historians look again at female motivation.

Chapter Four shifts the focus of the dissertation to the sexual lives of early modern celibates. The marital discourse would have enjoyed little validity in the Tudor and Stuart periods had access to procreative intercourse outside of marriage been acceptable. The fact that both legitimate and illegitimate fertility fell in tandem with marriage rates, however, suggests that restrictions on all extra-marital procreative intercourse were successfully enforced. This chapter therefore examines the extent to which early modern celibates were able to indulge in procreative intercourse outside the bonds of matrimony, while also considering the relative role of the church, the state and the community in the maintenance of sexual continence. Though there has been much debate as to whether religion or economics constituted the more significant element in deterring undesirable sexual activity, the fact that it was the cultural setting *in toto* that conspired to suppress extra-marital sexual incontinence reveals once again the pervasiveness and strength of the marital discourse. However, this chapter is also concerned to problematise the historiographical image of celibate sexual activity. By interpreting marriage as a life-cycle phenomenon with procreative sex as its ultimate

aim, historians have given primacy - whether wittingly or unwittingly - to the act of intercourse between man and a woman, and relegated a range of other sexual activities to a position of lower value. In contrast, this chapter argues not only for the presence of other forms of sexual gratification within Tudor and Stuart society, but suggests in addition that rather than view them as the precursor to full penetrative intercourse, they should be understood as satisfactory and fulfilling expressions of sexuality in their own right.

The final chapter examines the role of the marriage discourse in directing the employment opportunities, social status and cultural identity of single people in seventeenth century England. Here the effects of the discourse, which sought to promote the inevitability of entry into marriage as a general truth, are revealed in a gendered approach to training and employment, differential levels of access of men and women to land and property, and a concept of personal and social identity that for women was linked almost exclusively to marriage as a lifecycle phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the extensive social and cultural ramifications of a rise in the proportion of lifelong celibate females, a situation that, regardless of its causes, required single women to reassess the image of themselves as wives and mothers and construct an alternative personal and social identity outside the standard marital paradigm.

Though in modern parlance, the use of the term “single” can encompass the never-marrieds in addition to those who are currently unmarried (e.g., widows and widowers), this study is solely concerned with celibates, here defined simply as individuals who had never married. This accords well with the use of the term “single” in contemporary literature, for in line with dominant understandings of marriage as a lifecycle process, singleness was an estate ranged between adolescence and wedlock, and does not appear to have been applied to either widows or widowers as a general rule.⁹ Other problems of definition arise as a result of arbitrary decisions about when an unmarried person can be described as permanently single. Thus demographers, whose prime interest in the measurement of celibacy is related to its effect on fertility, often prefer to set the age of permanent singleness, for women at least, at the age of fifty, since the risk of childbearing after this point is negligible.¹⁰

⁹ See Appendix I.

¹⁰ S. Cotts Watkins, “Spinsters”, *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984): 310, fn. 1.

The discovery by Wrigley and Schofield, for example, that very few first marriages occurred to men and women older than forty-two or forty-three years of age encouraged them to base their celibacy calculations on the proportions of people remaining unmarried between the ages of forty and forty-four.¹¹ Susan Cotts Watkins, meanwhile, chose the age of thirty-five to demarcate the onset of spinsterhood, since according to her research anyone still single at thirty-five is more than likely to remain so.¹² In this study there has been no attempt to demarcate the definitive celibate by age, primarily because very few of the contemporary records provide sufficient detail to allow this, but also because to do so presupposes a general acceptance of the marital discourse. Instead individuals have been defined as celibate if, at the point of contact with the researcher, they were single, and had not previously been married. Other terms, such as “spinster” and “bachelor” are occasionally used interchangeably with their gender-equivalent definitions - “single woman” and “single man” - and the gender-free term “celibate” during the course of the study for stylistic purposes. Problems arising as a result of the application of the term “spinster” in a seventeenth century context are discussed in greater detail in Appendix II, but the use of the titles “spinster” and “bachelor” to denote those who were not and had not been married was a common feature of the documentation throughout the period in question, and in addition appears to have grown in significance as the period progressed.

Finally, while the research was inspired by a desire to investigate the lives of single men and single women in seventeenth century England, much of the emphasis of the dissertation in its completed form focuses around the lives of single women. The reasons for this are twofold. In the first instance, single women are much easier to isolate in the contemporary source material, for they were more frequently defined in terms of their marital status. In the second, the fact that women remained celibate had far greater demographic implications in terms of their reproductive potential. Men were clearly of equal importance in terms of the generative process, but it is the fertility schedules of women that are of most interest to modern demographers. Contemporary commentators too, singled out the reproductive capabilities of women as the primary reason for their need to enter marriage, both in terms of their own salvation, and for the greater good of society. But the cultural implications of a rise in

¹¹ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 257-8, and fn. 99.

¹² Watkins, “Spinsters”, 310, fn. 1.

the proportion of single women appear to have been of chief significance. For while much of the articulation of celibacy in the later seventeenth century was ranged around the perception that levels of male antipathy to marriage were rising, a parallel attack on the notion of the lifelong spinster indicates that it was the attitudes and activities of single women that were the source of most concern.

Chapter One

The relative importance of celibacy in early modern historical demography

A large proportion of the females remain unmarried, though at an adult age, which is a dead loss to the nation, every birth being so much certain treasure; upon which account, such laws must be for the public good, as induce all men to marry whose circumstances permit it.¹

Interest in demography as a field of investigation in England has its origins in the seventeenth century with the work of John Graunt, the London haberdasher and amateur statistician. It was not until the appearance of *The Population History of England 1541-1871 A Reconstruction* in 1981, however, that the demographic profile of the early modern period came into sharp focus. Accordingly, from a low level probably located at some point in the fifteenth century, the population of England appears to have embarked upon a period of gradual increase. Numbers for the early sixteenth century prior to the advent of parish registration in 1538 remain obscure, but England was considerably more populous by the middle of the seventeenth century than it had been just over a century earlier: the population had doubled its capacity from an estimated size of 2.774 million in 1541 to reach a pinnacle of 5.284 million by 1657. This aggregated figure shields a wide variety of individual, local and regional experience, and even from a national perspective, growth was not entirely linear - the advent of a nationwide epidemic of influenza between 1556 and 1561 which followed hard on the heels of harvest failure, offered a significant check to demographic expansion. But recovery was swift and widespread, and by the late sixteenth century England as a nation was more heavily populated than it had been for over two centuries. Such long-term upward movement, however, could not be indefinitely sustained. After 1657 there followed several decades of stagnation and decline, with the result that by 1700 the size of the population had fallen back from its mid-century high to the slightly lower figure of 5.027 million.²

¹ C. D'Avenant, "An Essay upon the Probable Methods of Making A People Gainers in the Balance of Trade" (1699), in C. Whitworth, ed., *The Political and Commercial Works of the celebrated Writer Charles D'Avenant, LL.D., Volume II* (1771), 191-2.

² Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Appendix 3, 531-3. R.A. Houston has offered slightly higher figures for national population levels during this period - 3.02 million for 1541 and 5.47 for

The size of a population is affected by the level of activity of three inter-related variables - fertility, mortality and migration - each of which, under the influence of a range of endogenous and exogenous factors, is capable of acting independently, or in any number of combinations, to affect demographic totals. The primary aim of demographic investigation, once evidence of change has been established, is then to expose the relative significance of each of the variables in affecting population movements. While extrapolating the relative role of fertility, mortality and migration in the demographic stagnation of the mid-seventeenth century has proved to be especially problematic - each of the variables involved underwent substantial fluctuation over the century as a whole - the effect exerted by changes in migration remains the most difficult to isolate. In 1981 Wrigley and Schofield were able to produce fairly robust estimates of the net outflow of migration over the course of three centuries from 1541, which suggested the presence of a series of cyclical movements in migratory activity that peaked in the 1650s.³ A decade later, however, revisions by Jim Oeppen revealed that the rate of net outflow may have actually reached its apogee in the mid-sixteenth century - at 1.7 per 1,000 the figure had been proportionally higher in the 1560s than at any other time between 1541 and 1866.⁴

Yet this evidence in itself was insufficient to deny emigration a role in the demographic stagnation of the seventeenth century. Over the course of the three hundred or so years in question, Wrigley and Schofield found that the volume of net outward migration was low compared to the surplus of births over deaths; consequently such movement was likely to have reduced the rate of population growth by only a relatively small amount. Between 1650 and 1750, however, when natural increase was low and occasionally non-existent, it is possible that the net outflow could have exerted a more powerful influence on national trends: during the period from 1656 to 1686 the size of the English population fell from 5.281 million to 4.865 million, fifty-eight per cent of which may have been attributable to a net outward movement. Nevertheless, the true extent of the effect remains elusive, for Wrigley and Schofield have cautioned against too heavy a concentration on estimates

1656 (Wrigley and Schofield suggest 5.28 million at this date) - on the basis of his use of more reliable statistical techniques. See R.A. Houston, *The Population History of Britain and Ireland 1500-1700* (1992), reprinted in M. Anderson, ed., *British Population History From the Black Death to the present day* (Cambridge, 1996), 119.

³ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.11, 219; Figure 7.5, 220.

⁴ J. Oeppen, "Back-projection and inverse-projection: members of a wider class of constrained projection models", *Population Studies*, 45 (1991): 253.

of emigration. Because such figures are produced through the process of back projection they “must be subject to strong reservations”, since they are derived not from statistics on outward migration, but rather from the numbers of deaths “missing” from the registers (projected deaths in a particular birth cohort minus recorded deaths). As a result such estimates tend to exaggerate the true level of net emigration since they include all those whose deaths went unrecorded at home and abroad, in addition to true emigrants. In the longer term, therefore, Wrigley and Schofield have allocated far more significance to proximate changes in mortality and fertility in determining rates of demographic change.⁵

I. A brief historiography of demographic thought.

The relative weight allocated to fertility, mortality and migration in driving population movements in the early modern period has undergone significant revision since Graunt introduced the concept of demographic analysis into the literature of seventeenth century England. Contemporary commentators themselves were acutely aware of the effects of all three variables on population figures. The economic writer, Carew Reynel, for example, attributed England’s “want of people” in 1674 to the fact that “some three hundred thousand were killed in the last Civil Wars; and about two hundred thousand more have been wasted in re-peopling Ireland; and two hundred thousand lost in the great sickness, and as many more gone to the plantations.”⁶ Yet seventeenth century commentaries tended to reflect the greater significance that was accorded to fertility in any analyses of demographic change - whatever the reason behind the loss of population, there was a general understanding that any decline could easily be accommodated within a regime of high fertility. Moreover, such fertility was to be achieved primarily through encouraging individuals to marry. Reynel himself suggested that an excellent way for a country to be populous was by “countenancing marriage and a settled life, giving it many privileges more than either single or debauched persons, and that none but married persons be capable of any profitable office or preferment”; this Reynel claimed, was “the very original of the well being and continuance of nations”.⁷ Charles D’Avenant, an early political

⁵ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 219-28. The effect of emigration in terms of its relationship with fertility is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

⁶ C. Reynel, *The True English Interest* (1674), in J. Thirsk and J.P.Cooper, eds., *Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents* (Oxford, 1972), 758.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 759.

economist, was also of the opinion that the state ought to “invite men to marry, which is to be done by privileges and exemptions for such a number of children, and by denying certain offices of trust and dignities to all unmarried persons”.⁸ Marriage in the later seventeenth century was increasingly constructed in terms of its reproductive capabilities, reflecting to a large extent the mercantilist mentality of the period. James Harrington’s tract *Oceana*, for example, unveiled a manifesto keen to promote a “commonwealth for increase” - fathers of ten children were to pay no taxes at all, while childless bachelors over the age of twenty-five were liable for double the appropriate rate - and a number of other writers took up similar themes. Edmund Halley, writer and astronomer, who believed a number of people feared to marry “from the prospect of the trouble and charge of providing for a family” suggested that the state of celibacy should be taxed, and bounties given to large families.⁹ Similarly, the anonymous author of the pamphlet entitled *Marriage Promoted*, which first appeared in 1690, recommended the setting up of a statute “obliging all Men from Twenty One Years of Age to Marry or in default to pay a Mulct in proportion to their Fortunes.”¹⁰ The sums collected were to be distributed to single women in the form of portions.

The significance of marriage in demographic analysis continued to permeate eighteenth century explanations of change. Writing first in 1798, and drawing principally on the ideas of the classical school of economic thought, Thomas Malthus, author and cleric, outlined his considered opinion of the general relationship between marriage and demographic expansion:

If I find that at a certain period in ancient history, the encouragements to have a family were great, that early marriages were consequently very prevalent, and that few persons remained single, I should infer with certainty that population was rapidly increasing To speak therefore, correctly, perhaps it may be said that the number of unmarried persons in proportion to the whole number, existing at different periods, in the same or different states will enable

⁸ D’Avenant, “Essay”, 191.

⁹ Ibid., 119-20.

¹⁰ Anon., *Marriage Promoted. In a Discourse of its Ancient and Modern Practice, both under Heathen and Christian Commonwealths* (1690), 30.

us to judge whether population at these periods was increasing, stationary, or decreasing.¹¹

Yet Malthus was not concerned merely to identify the direction of population movements, but also their dynamics. By the close of the eighteenth century, much of the optimistic expansionism of the later seventeenth century had evaporated. Malthus not only recognised that mankind as a species was strongly and continuously motivated by a desire for sexual intercourse - "That the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state" - but also that ultimately such action could result in catastrophe.¹² Uncontrolled demographic expansion would tend towards outstripping the available volume of food supplies, leading to a situation of rising inflation, static or falling wage levels, and progressive immiseration, since "population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio ... This implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence."¹³

In consequence Malthus offered a two-stage account of the process involved in the return to equilibrium status that was necessary to keep population levels in line with resources (at a given standard of living). The first stage of his theory involved a limitation of fertility through the age and extent of marriage. If resources were scarce relative to numbers of people, marriages tended to be later, and there were more never-married adults among the general population, dampening levels of fertility and halting demographic expansion: "A foresight of the difficulties attending the rearing of a family, acts as a preventative check" to population growth. Indeed Malthus believed that the preventative-check mechanism was widespread and operated to some degree throughout every rank in England: "There are some men, even in the highest rank, who are prevented from marrying by the idea of the expenses that they must retrench, and the fancied pleasures that they must deprive themselves of, on the supposition of having a family".¹⁴

In the final instance, however, there was always the possibility that a positive check - a surge in mortality - would provide a last-case scenario for culling unacceptable levels of population growth. The second stage of his theory therefore

¹¹ Malthus, *Essay*, 87-8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 71.

involved the application of a more radical restraint: where changes in the age at marriage and the proportion ever marrying proved inadequate at halting demographic expansion and a battle for resources ensued, the point of equilibrium was achieved through a rise in the number of deaths. Malthus tended to associate the operation of the positive-check mechanism more closely with the lowest orders of society: “The actual distresses of some of the lower classes, by which they are disabled from giving the proper food and attention to their children, acts as a positive check to the natural increase of population”.¹⁵ And though he believed the preventative and positive checks to have been mutually exclusive, Malthus recognised the two categories were not exhaustive. By the time his second essay was published in 1803, he had therefore expanded the positive check mechanism to include,

Every cause ... which in any degree contribute[s] to shorten the natural duration of human life. Under this head, therefore, may be enumerated, all unwholesome occupations, severe labour and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the whole train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, pestilence, plague, and famine.¹⁶

Though Malthus’ persuasive theory of the need to maintain an operative balance between population and resources was articulated most clearly in terms of fertility - in the second edition of his treatise on population growth he greatly enlarged the concept of the effectiveness of the preventative check in throttling back undesirable growth - the effects of mortality were more clearly visible in the documentary sources, and much easier to evidence. The positive check mechanism therefore rose to a position of prominence in discussions of population dynamics in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, and became enshrined in demographic transition theory.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ W.J. Ashley, ed., *Parallel Chapters from the First and Second Editions of An Essay on the Principle of Population by T.R. Malthus 1798 : 1803* (1926), 89.

¹⁷ In demographic transition theory, populations are thought to have laboured under a regime of high fertility and high mortality - a mortality-dominated high pressure system - until economic development brought about a fall in mortality rates. Such a fall was then followed, after a substantial time lag, by a fall in levels of fertility. See A.J. Coale and E.M. Hoover, “The Effects of Economic Development on

II. The role of mortality

Certainly by modern standards, individual life-spans appeared severely attenuated, and death from pathogenic activity remained the most likely cause of demise in pre-industrial England. As R.A. Houston has indicated, "It is probably safe to say that most deaths in the early modern period were from infectious diseases rather than from accidents, non-infectious ailments and old age".¹⁸ Although the population of England was at last increasing after the long stagnation of the later Middle Ages, the demographic landscape of sixteenth and seventeenth century England in many respects remained bleak. While the frequency and severity of plague outbreaks, the most notorious of medieval killers, may have faltered over the course of the seventeenth century, plague itself constituted merely one among a whole range of communicable pathogens that were capable of reducing the life expectancy of the individual. Influenza, sweating sickness, burning fevers and spotted fevers, the latter probably including outbreaks of typhus, all assisted in maintaining the high mortality rate of the period as a whole, while smallpox and measles increased their epidemiological importance in England after 1600.¹⁹

Confirmation of the deadly effects of a variety of independent pathogens is borne out through a consultation of any number of early modern parish registers. The catastrophic harvests of 1555 and 1556, for example, were followed in the spring of 1557 by a two-year influenza epidemic, the cause of the worst mortality crisis of the early modern period. There is continued debate as to the full extent of the mortality - Wrigley and Schofield have suggested a lower limit of 5.5 per cent for the total loss of life between 1556 and 1561 while Jack Fisher put the death toll at nearer 20 per cent - but there is overall agreement that the influenza epidemic of the mid-sixteenth century constituted a significant period in English demographic history in terms of heightened mortality.²⁰ Plague too remained an insistent threat. By the sixteenth century,

Population Growth and The Effects of Population Growth on Economic Development", in M. Drake, ed., *Population in Industrialisation* (1969), 15.

¹⁸ Houston, *Population History*, 148.

¹⁹ A.B. Appleby, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (Liverpool, 1978), 120; A Dyer, "Epidemics of Measles in a Seventeenth-Century English Town", *Local Population Studies*, 34 (1984): 44.

²⁰ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.8, 208-9; F.J. Fisher, "Influenza and Inflation in Tudor England", *Economic History Review*, 18 (1965): 127. See also J.S. Moore, "'Jack Fisher's 'flu': a visitation revisited", *Economic History Review*, 45 (1993): 280-307; M. Zell, "Fisher's 'flu and Moore's probates: quantifying the mortality crisis of 1556-1560", *Economic History Review*, 47

epidemics of bubonic plague had become less familiar among rural communities, but they remained a particular cause of suffering and disruption in urban areas. The disease itself was especially visible in the capital, and there was scarcely a year in sixteenth and early seventeenth century London during which plague was absent. Indeed, it became “the single most important cause of death” in London after 1560, accounting for more than fifteen per cent of all deaths between 1580 and 1650.²¹ Thus in 1563, during the first measurable epidemic, nearly a quarter of the city’s inhabitants lost their lives, proportionately the highest death toll of the whole period. The capital lost between around a fifth to an eighth of its inhabitants in the epidemics of 1593, 1603 and 1625 and in the space of the three months between August and October in 1665 almost a sixth of the population of London had perished.²² Smaller towns could suffer similar losses. Plague was active in Cambridge on ten separate occasions between 1574 and 1630-31, and crisis mortality occurred in a number of the town’s parishes in 1588, 1595, 1616-17 and 1619-20.²³ Bristol lost a sixth of its population in three bouts of disease between 1565 and 1603 and York lost a quarter of its inhabitants in 1604; mortality rates jumped to thirty per cent in Newcastle in 1636-7 and Lichfield in 1645-6, and in the final visitation of the plague to Colchester in 1665-6 nearly half of the population of the town was swept away.²⁴

Nor did rural areas escape unscathed. Though bubonic plague can be characterised largely, if not exclusively, as an urban phenomenon in the early modern period, rural areas could also suffer continued outbreaks. During the century after 1538 the increasingly commercialised north-eastern community of Whickham, for

(1994): 354-8; J.S. Moore, “ ‘Jack Fisher’s ‘flu’: a virus still virulent”, *Economic History Review*, 47 (1994): 359-61.

²¹ S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 1989), 72. See also R. Finlay, *Population and Metropolis The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge, 1981), 111-32 and J. Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), 47-9.

²² P. Slack, “Metropolitan government in crisis: the response to plague”, in A.L. Beier and R. Finlay, eds., *The Making of the Metropolis London 1500-1700* (1986), 61-2.

²³ N. Goose, “Household size and structure in early-Stuart Cambridge”, *Social History*, 5 (1980): 355. Crisis mortality as defined most simply by R.S. Schofield occurs when the annual total number of burials is more than twice the average annual number of burials for that year. R.S. Schofield, “ ‘Crisis’ Mortality”, *Local Population Studies*, 9 (1972): 13. A more sophisticated measure can be found in Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 646-9, and a discussion of the associated problems in J. Walter and R. Schofield, “Famine, disease and crisis mortality in early modern England”, J. Walter and R. Schofield, eds., *Famine, disease and the social order in early modern society* (Cambridge, 1989), 5-7.

²⁴ P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), 89; C. Galley, *The Demography of Early Modern Towns: York in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Liverpool, 1998), 5, 77.

example, endured seventeen identifiable periods in which annual burials were more than double their normal background level, and in 1604 a fifth to a quarter of all inhabitants were buried within the space of five months.²⁵ Plague was not the only cause of death in the countryside. Marshland communities may have escaped much of the worst of its effects, but they frequently suffered heavily from the onslaught of malaria and other agues - the Lincolnshire fen parishes of Fleet and Gedney, for example, appear to have suffered a secular erosion of population from 1601 until 1800, the victims of a demographic regime that was at variance with practically all other Lincolnshire parishes during the eighteenth century, as well as the country as a whole.²⁶ Similarly in the twenty-four coastal and estuarine marsh parishes examined by M. Dobson in her study of south-east England in the early modern period, burials had started to overtake baptisms in the decade beginning in 1581, the excess of burials finally reaching its peak in the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁷

In addition to the consistent onslaught of disease, Paul Slack has suggested that “virtually every bad harvest appears to have been followed by a period of high mortality”.²⁸ Though the mixed economy of winter and spring sown crops is generally considered to have emancipated England from much of the threat of death by famine - at least by the later seventeenth century - there were crises of subsistence as a result of periods of local and national grain shortages. Economic historians are generally agreed that the years 1594-1597 constituted the most damaging instances of harvest failure in England in the early modern period, when the country as a whole suffered an unbroken succession of four bad harvests. The most severe upward movements in food prices, however, occurred between the years 1596-97 and 1597-98, during which time national trends in death rates were also well above normal.²⁹ In point of fact, the combined effects of poor harvests and a collapse in the price of wool in 1597 may have brought much of the country near to famine.³⁰ According to Clark

²⁵ K. Wrightson and D. Levine, “Death in Whickham”, in Walter and Schofield, eds., *Famine*, 139-41.

²⁶ J.A. Johnston, “Population Trends in Lincolnshire 1601 - 1800”, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 31 (1996): 23.

²⁷ M.J. Dobson, “The last hiccup of the old demographic regime: population stagnation and decline in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century south-east England”, *Continuity and Change*, 4 (1989): 411.

²⁸ P. Slack, “Mortality crises and epidemic disease in England, 1485-1610”, in C. Webster, ed., *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), 17.

²⁹ Appleby, *Famine*, 112, 133-35.

³⁰ P.J. Bowden, ed., *Economic change: wages, profits and rents 1500-1750 Chapters from The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, ed. J. Thirsk, Volume 1 (Cambridge, 1990), 146. Harvest failure and agricultural shortage were key aspects of European experience more generally during the

and Slack mortality rates in Barnstaple and Tamworth and several other towns doubled in 1597, and in four poor suburban parishes of Bristol the death rate climbed to three times its normal level; in many other areas too there was evidence of starvation and its characteristic physiological consequences - typhus and dysentery.³¹

In some rural areas the problem of starvation may have been intensified, with the work of Andrew Appleby in particular highlighting the plight of the north-west in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed Appleby's main contribution to the historiography of early modern mortality rests on his conviction that the role of famine as a killer in its own right had been downplayed. Between 1550 and 1700 Cumberland and Westmoreland experienced three severe demographic crises when burials in many parishes in the years 1587-88, 1597-98 and 1623 rose to two, three or even four times their background level.³² Appleby suspected that high levels of mortality during the first crisis were likely to have been caused by typhus, since burials were uncommonly numerous during the winter months. Moreover, the widespread incidence of typhus in both counties under observation encouraged him to suggest that the disease may have been shielding a number of famine deaths, for the dead included unusually high numbers of beggars and the poor, and the epidemic itself had been preceded by a period of dearth. The second period of high mortality was by way of a mixed crisis; deaths in 1597, as might be expected in view of the national experience, appear to have been famine-related, but by 1598 the culprit was almost certainly plague.³³ However, the subsequent crisis of 1623 Appleby related exclusively to the problem of starvation.³⁴ Once again, 1622 was a year of dearth across the nation when grain prices rose to their highest point since 1596, a factor that was exacerbated by a further slump in the price of wool between 1622 and 1623.³⁵ Moreover, the likelihood that famine bore much of the responsibility for heightened levels of mortality in Cumberland and Westmoreland in the 1620s received

1590s, as food prices in many countries doubled or trebled between 1590 and 1596-7. See P. Clark, ed., *The European Crisis of the 1590s* (1985), 8.

³¹ Clark and Slack, *English Towns*, 90-1.

³² Appleby, *Famine*, 95.

³³ Idem, "Disease or Famine? Mortality in Cumberland and Westmoreland 1580-1640", *Economic History Review*, 26 (1973): 408, 413, 419.

³⁴ Appleby was also able to attribute changes in fertility to malnutrition. Dearth appears to have triggered a state of amenorrhoea amongst the fertile women of the area that functioned to reduce the number of conceptions - the initial decline in baptisms in 1622, for example, before the dramatic rise in burials, suggests that food shortages may have begun to inhibit conceptions before they elicited death. Idem, *Famine*, 148.

³⁵ Bowden, *Economic change*, 122, 147.

confirmation from the fact that neighbouring regions exhibited similar tendencies in terms of higher death rates. In the West Riding of Yorkshire the fall in baptisms in Halifax for the three years after 1621 completely wiped out the natural increase of the previous four years. Figures for burials in the East Riding parish of Great Driffield in 1623 and 1624 were thirty-three and sixty-seven respectively, way above the annual average of twelve, and at Bainton in the East Riding of Yorkshire the parish clerk though it apposite to record in the margin of the register, “Hoc anno multi fame periere” (this year many perished in the famine).³⁶ A general upsurge in mortality in Northern Lincolnshire has also been associated with the bad harvest of 1622-23, a problem that was compounded by the effects of economic recession. Thus the riverside market town of Barton upon Humber experienced a population cutback of approximately fifteen per cent between 1623 and 1624, and the state of near-starvation in the surrounding area was reflected most vividly in the much quoted letter written by Sir William Pelham of Brocklesby to his brother the Right Honourable Sir Edward Conway in 1623;

There are many thousands in these parts who have soule all they have even to theyr bedd straw, and cann not gett worke to earne any munny. Dogg’s flesh is a dainty disch, and found upon search in many houses, also such horse flesch as hath laien long in a deke for hounds, and the other day one stole a scheepe, whoo for meere hunger tore a legge out, and didd eate itt raw.³⁷

Attempts to uncover evidence of generalised Malthusian-type subsistence crises, however, tend to run into difficulty. The 1590s proved to be exceptionally bad years in terms of the harvest nationwide, but even during this period of generalised distress, some localities proved more fortunate than others. While Appleby has succeeded in establishing some increased vulnerability to famine in the upland north west, and serious food shortages were reported in many parishes in Yorkshire and further north in the county of Durham, as few as nineteen per cent of the parishes studied by the Cambridge Group experienced a mortality crisis during 1597-98, and

³⁶ Appleby, *Famine*, 148.

³⁷ *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, I (1889): 16.

only sixteen per cent during 1623-4.³⁸ In London as early as 1662, John Graunt himself had repudiated the belief that starving beggars in the city were dying in their multitudes, his first observation on the particulars of casualties noting “that few are starved”: of more than two hundred thousand people who died in London between 1603 and 1660, the weekly bills of mortality suggested that no more than fifty-one had perished from lack of food, apart from a few cases of infants, who did so as a result of the ignorance and infirmity of their wet-nurses.³⁹ In addition, more recent investigation by Jeremy Boulton has tended to confirm the autonomous nature of raised periods of mortality in the capital. High numbers of entries in the burial registers of the London parish of St. Saviour between 1590 and 1640, with the possible exception of 1597, appear to have been caused by disease, rather than dearth (of which plague was the most common form), for the significant mortality peaks of 1592, 1603, 1609, 1625 and 1636, for example, all occurred outside periods of social and economic hardship within the capital.⁴⁰

Interpretations of the Malthusian positive check mechanism have also tended to imply that populations on the borders of subsistence were more susceptible to disease than their wealthier counterparts. Yet disease was not the necessary corollary of a bad harvest. Despite serious harvest deficiencies in 1555 and 1556 the proportion of parishes in the sample surveyed by the Cambridge Group that experienced a mortality crisis did not rise above seven per cent of the total until the August of 1557. During this harvest, the crop was plentiful, but rather than being accompanied by a fall in the proportion of parishes experiencing crisis mortality, levels rose to reach a maximum of twenty per cent in November 1557 as a result of the influenza epidemic before returning to normal levels in January of 1558.⁴¹ Similarly sudden outbreaks of disease were more commonly related to unpredictable pathogenic activity than marginalisation and undernourishment. R.B. Morrow has suggested that the appearance of plague in Colyton in the 1660s may have amounted to a Malthusian visitation, visualising the community at this time as one containing unusually large

³⁸ Appleby, *Famine*, 147-8; Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table A10.2, 653.

³⁹ J. Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations Upon the Bills of Mortality*, fifth edition (1676), in C.H. Hull, ed., *The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty Together with the Observations Upon the Bills of Mortality More Probably by John Graunt, Volume I* (Cambridge, 1899), 352.

⁴⁰ The 1634 peak in burials could have been caused by the first recorded smallpox epidemic, for the London Bills of Mortality record 1, 354 smallpox victims in 1634 but only one of plague. See Boulton, *Neighbourhood*, 47.

⁴¹ Walter and Schofield, “Famine, disease and crisis mortality”, 30-1.

numbers of those living at the physical margin of existence.⁴² Wrigley's rebuttal meanwhile indicated that he could find no evidence of Colyton being closer to the economic or demographic edge than similar Devon communities nearby, a fact that called into question why the plague had not struck in other neighbouring parishes with equal ferocity.⁴³

Indeed, the fragility of the nutrition-mortality link in pre-industrial times has been underlined by the work of M. Livi-Bacci.⁴⁴ A connection between malnutrition and higher levels of fatality does appear to exist for tuberculosis, measles and diarrhoea, and famine and typhus are likely to be inter-related, but the biological effect of poor nutrition on the chances of contracting and dying from other disease organisms remains highly questionable - bubonic plague, smallpox, malaria and typhoid were so virulent that death or survival bore little relation to nutritional status.⁴⁵ Mortality remains an important element in explanations of short-term demographic downturns, but was more likely to be the result of exogenous pathogens than any classic Malthusian subsistence crisis. Despite the evidence of Appleby, mortality as a demographic variable appears to have been weakly integrated into the economic system: only sixteen percent of the short-run variation in mortality in England over the early modern period could be associated with price change. In addition secular movements indicated by changes in real wages seem to have had little measurable effect on mortality levels. As J.D. Chambers has argued, "Random biological causes operating in successive onslaughts on an already high death rate were so powerful through to the middle of the eighteenth century that they could initiate long waves of demographic depression independently of available per capita resources".⁴⁶

⁴² R.B. Morrow, "Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England: A Reappraisal", *Economic History Review*, 31 (1978): 427.

⁴³ E.A. Wrigley, "Marital Fertility in Seventeenth-Century Colyton: A Note", *Economic History Review*, 31 (1978): 435.

⁴⁴ M. Livi-Bacci, "The Nutrition-Mortality Link in Past Times: A Comment", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1983): 293-8.

⁴⁵ Idem, *Population and Nutrition An Essay on European Demographic History* (Cambridge, 1991), Table 7, 38; Walter and Schofield, "Famine", 19. Walter and Schofield have highlighted the complexity of the interaction between disease and nutritional status, and the problem of separating out the effects of nutrition from other factors.

⁴⁶ R.S. Schofield, "The Impact of Scarcity and Plenty on Population Change in England, 1541-1871", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 14 (1983): 282, 277. See also Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 413-6; J.D. Chambers, *Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial England* (1972), 87.

Measuring the full extent of the effect of mortality on population levels, however, remains problematic. In the first instance, it appears that the number of cases in which crisis mortality hit early modern communities had actually gone into decline during the course of the seventeenth century. A preliminary survey of fifty-four parishes in 1972 by Roger Schofield indicated that the number of communities experiencing crisis mortality in the pre-industrial period had diminished after the 1650s, although the sharpest downward movement was reserved for the century that followed.⁴⁷ Almost a decade later, in 1981, information gathered from a total of 404 parishes allowed Wrigley and Schofield to examine crisis mortality on a much wider front. The fact that they employed a more specific definition of crisis mortality, however, did little to detract from Schofield's earlier analysis: once again a generalized pattern of a fall in the number of months in which parishes endured excessive levels of mortality over the course of the seventeenth century emerged.⁴⁸

Table 1.1: Crisis months in 404 parishes per 1, 000 months observed, by quarter century.

Quarter century	Months observed	Crisis months (per 1, 000 observed)
1550-74	50, 064	14.6
1575-99	86, 256	13.4
1600-24	105, 960	12.6
1625-49	113, 760	12.9
1650-74	119, 916	10.8
1675-99	121, 200	10.0

Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table A10.1, 650.

Crises were not uniform across parishes, nor was the decline as linear as the aggregated figures for the quarter centuries in Table 1.1 above suggest, but the pattern was clear: the number of months in which crisis mortality was observed fell from over

⁴⁷ Schofield, " 'Crisis' Mortality", Table III, 17.

⁴⁸ For their definition of crisis mortality see Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 646-9.

fourteen in the third quarter of the sixteenth century to ten in the last quarter of the seventeenth. The violent upsurges in mortality levels associated with the influenza outbreak of the mid-sixteenth century then “look as if they may have been the last throes of a late-medieval régime of widespread epidemic mortality”.⁴⁹

At the same time, however, mortality rates appear to have undergone deterioration, a situation that can in part be attributed to increased levels of urbanisation.⁵⁰ Infectious and contagious diseases spread rapidly in large and densely packed populations, and the most destructive organisms often became endemic. Furthermore, childhood illnesses such as measles and scarlet fever tended to attack urban children at an earlier age than their rural counterparts and were more likely to result in death.⁵¹ Infant mortality, in particular, could be extremely high in urban areas. Though some of the smaller towns such as Colyton experienced a rate of around 150 infant deaths per 1, 000 in the Tudor period, a figure not unlike many rural communities, in the larger towns and cities the situation was much worse: infant mortality stood at a figure of 235 per 1, 000 in the parish of St Michael le Belfy in York in the 1570s, and 256 per 1, 000 in St Botolph’s without Bishopsgate, a poorer London parish, in the early 1600s.⁵² However, there is little evidence of a major shift in levels of infant mortality over the course of the seventeenth century. Galley has indicated that there was only a small change in the infant death rate in the York parishes of St Martin Coney Street and St Michael le Belfrey between the early and late Stuart periods, and though the level of mortality amongst the under-ones on a national basis underwent some overall deterioration during this time, it was subject to considerable fluctuation.⁵³

⁴⁹ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 178.

⁵⁰ General conclusions suggest that the proportion of the English population living in towns of over four thousand in 1500 was six per cent, while by 1700 the percentage of those living in towns of over five thousand had reached a figure of fifteen per cent. See S.M. Jack, *Towns in Tudor and Stuart Britain* (1996), 173-4. Wrigley and Schofield have suggested that urban growth would have played a part in the rising mortality of the seventeenth century, since it progressed strongly during this period in marked contrast to the sixteenth century. Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 415.

⁵¹ Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 203.

⁵² Clark and Slack, *English Towns*, 85. In the Essex village of Terling the infant mortality rate stood at 131 per 1, 000 between 1538 and 1725, and in the Midland village of Bottesford, Leicestershire at 155 per 1, 000 during the seventeenth century. See K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), 57.

⁵³ Galley, *Demography*, 92. Through the early seventeenth century (1600-25) the infant mortality rate stood at 171 per 1, 000. Between 1625 and 1649 the rate fell to 157 per 1, 000, but by the period 1675-1699 the rate had risen to 189 per 1, 000. The lower figure during the second quarter of the century may have been affected by the problems of under-registration in the Commonwealth period. The figures are for legitimate and illegitimate births. Wrigley et al., *English Population*, Table 6.2, 219.

Increased levels of adult mortality were also a feature of the seventeenth century demographic landscape, especially during the later half of the period when fresh epidemics and the Civil War were succeeded by a period of heightened death rates. Mortality levels, which had largely retained their stability prior to 1650, fell away afterwards across the country, plummeting most spectacularly - as Table 1.2 reveals - during the 1680s.

Table 1.2: Crude mean death rates per decade (per 1, 000 total population), 1600-1699.

Decade	Rate	Decade	Rate
1600-9	23.76	1650-59	27.05
1610-19	25.97	1660-69	29.13
1620-29	25.89	1670-79	28.65
1630-39	26.07	1680-89	32.67
1640-49	25.92	1690-99	28.51

Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table A3.3, 532.

This deterioration is also discernible in the records of a number of early modern towns. Though the rise in mortality in the Devonshire market town of Colyton after a major epidemic in 1645 many have been more dramatic than elsewhere, its effects were mirrored in other areas: in places such as Barnstaple, Ashby de la Zouche and Lichfield the middle decades of the seventeenth century witnessed significant losses of population but enjoyed no rapid recovery as had previously been the case.⁵⁴ London remained the exception to this rule. The capital continued to expand at an alarming rate throughout the seventeenth century, bolstered by a steady stream of migrants of national and international origin, despite the fact that the city environment did little to promote the health of its inhabitants.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Clark and Slack, *English Towns*, 84. Wrigley suggested that adults in Colyton also suffered substantially higher mortality during the period 1625-99 than had been the case in earlier periods. E.A. Wrigley, "Mortality in Pre-Industrial England: The Example of Colyton, Devon, Over Three Centuries", *Daedalus*, 97 (1968): 561.

⁵⁵ At the beginning of the seventeenth century London was one of a handful of cities with at least one hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, but by its close, the capital had become the largest city in all of Europe with more than half a million people living within its boundaries, one tenth of the entire population of England. See Rappaport, *Worlds*, 61-2. Mortality rates in London were high and rising.

As mortality rates increased, so life expectation fell. There had been some improvement in the average lifespan towards the latter part of the sixteenth century, but expectation of life at birth appears to have undergone steady deterioration across the country during much of the seventeenth century.⁵⁶ Wrigley had drawn early attention to this situation in the course of his investigations of Colyton, where the fall in life expectation to thirty-four years during the second half of the seventeenth century reflected a drop of as much as ten years from the Elizabethan period.⁵⁷ Later evidence gathered from twelve communities for the first volume on population history tended to confirm the representative nature of such a shift: life expectancy reached its apogee during the quinquennium beginning in 1581, only to fall away afterwards to arrive at its nadir a century later.⁵⁸ The addition of a further fourteen parishes with the publication of the second volume in 1997 has qualified the extent of the seventeenth century fall, even though it has done little to alter the generally depressing pattern of decline. As Table 1.3 below reveals, the average life expectancy of men and women appears to have slumped from a highpoint of around forty in the 1610s and 1620s to bottom out at around thirty-one by the 1680s, a particularly bleak decade in terms of heightened mortality across the whole spectrum of age groups.

Table 1.3: Expectation of life at birth for males and females combined, 1600-1699.

Decade	Exp. of life at birth	Decade	Exp. of life at birth
1600-9	37.5	1650-5	36.9
1610-9	40.1	1660-9	36.5
1620-9	40.2	1670-9	36.3
1630-9	37.8	1680-9	31.3
1640-9	36.4	1690-9	38.7
1650-9	36.9		

Source: Wrigley et al, *English Population*, Table 6.21, 295.

In the parish of St Botolph's Bishopsgate, for example, the death rate in 1600 has been estimated at 29 per 1,000, but by 1690 this figure had risen to 45 per 1,000 in some of the London suburbs and even 37 per 1,000 in the richer city parishes. See Clark and Slack, *English Towns*, 85.

⁵⁶ Walter and Schofield, "Famine", 57-8.

⁵⁷ Wrigley, "Mortality", 559.

Yet statistics on life expectancy, which are usually calculated to reflect the number of years an individual might expect to live at the point of his or her birth, may fail to offer a full picture of the effect of mortality on population trends. Death rates in Colyton rose sharply for children over the age of five in the course of the seventeenth century, and worsening child mortality, according to Alan Dyer, was a prominent factor in the demographic depression of the later Stuart period.⁵⁹ Once again the results of the preliminary investigation of twelve parishes in 1981 had already indicated evidence of a divergence between expectation of life at birth and expectation of life at thirty, with the latter, as Table 1.4 demonstrates, having dropped only marginally over a hundred and fifty year period.

Table 1.4: Expectation of life at age thirty from twelve reconstitutions.

Period	Male	Female
1550-99	29.2	30.2
1600-49	29.8	29.6
1650-99	28.4	28.9

Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.21, 250.

Information from another fourteen parishes allowed the Cambridge Group to refine and extend such calculations.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the fact that expectation of life at birth and at the age of fifteen underwent an almost uninterrupted decline from the early seventeenth century onwards, the fall in life expectancy at twenty-five was less marked and even enjoyed slight improvement after 1650, although adults did not escape the sharp drop in life expectation during the 1680s that was characteristic of the general experience in late Stuart England.⁶¹

The explanation behind the differential sets of life expectancy figures appears to have been related to the increased incidence of a number of illnesses affecting

⁵⁸ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.15, 230. The figure for the 1581 quinquennium is 41.7 years and that for the 1681 quinquennium, 28.5 years.

⁵⁹ Wrigley, "Mortality", 559; Dyer, "Epidemics", 35.

⁶⁰ See especially Wrigley et al., *English Population*, Figure 6.15, 283.

children and young adults, most notably smallpox. This particular infection transformed itself from a relatively mild and familiar endemic childhood disease in the sixteenth century into a much more virulent and epidemic form in the seventeenth century, in which fatalities among the immune deficient were high.⁶² In London smallpox was endemic, but it also appeared in epidemic form: Samuel Pepys, for example, recorded in his diary in February of 1668 “that hardly ever was remembered such a season for the small pox as these last two months have been”.⁶³ But epidemics were also a feature of smaller urban communities, where outbreaks could last considerably longer - the town of Winchester was stricken by a smallpox epidemic in 1684 and burials remained at a higher than normal level until 1686.⁶⁴ Neither did rural communities escape. Though smallpox did not sweep the country in the form of a national outbreak, it appears to have retained a background presence, returning to strike individual communities when their populations contained sufficient numbers of susceptible hosts.⁶⁵ Moreover, the fact that young people appear to have been particularly at risk is reflected in a number of diary entries.⁶⁶

Measles, too, may have entered a phase of increased virulence in the mid-seventeenth century. The modern history of the infection suggests it passes through peaks and troughs of virulence, these phases tending to take a thirty-year cycle. Tracking its incidence in contemporary material is often problematic, for prior to 1670 there was only a limited awareness of the principal fatal diseases that produced

⁶¹ Ibid., 281-3.

⁶² Dyer, “Epidemics”, 38.

⁶³ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 668; R.C. Latham and W. Matthew, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Volume IX, 1668-9* (1976), 58.

⁶⁴ A. Rosen, “Winchester in Transition 1580-1700”, in P. Clark, ed., *Country towns in pre-industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), 171.

⁶⁵ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 669. In Swedish data from the late eighteenth century smallpox returned to parishes every six to eight years, rarely killing anyone over that age. Ibid., 656, fn. 28.

⁶⁶ On July 8th, 1665 Henry Newcome recorded the devastating effects of a smallpox outbreak in his home town of Manchester. “Mr Worthington had buried his pretty little daughter of the small-pox; Mr Farrant, his only son; and the small-pox prevailing greatly in the town and very mortal”: R. Parkinson, ed., *The Autobiography of Henry Newcome, MA, Volume 1*, Chetham Society, 26 (1952): 151. In 1680 William Stout’s two youngest brothers Richard and Thomas died of smallpox “which distemper was very fatal this year”: J.D. Marshall, ed., *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752* (Manchester, 1967), 76. Abraham de la Pryme, vicar and antiquarian, also suffered great personal loss in 1689. “This year a strange kind of a violent and burning fever, together with the small pox reigned so in our family that I lost two brothers and two sisters”: C. Jackson, ed., *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme*, Surtees Society, 54 (1969): 16. In 1684 William and Dorothy Temple lost their only daughter to smallpox: E.A. Parry, ed., *Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple 1652-54* (1888), 313.

raised rashes.⁶⁷ In its modern manifestation, however, measles is more infectious than smallpox, and in cases where immunity is low, can kill between twenty and twenty-five per cent of those who contract it, including adults who have experienced no previous exposure to the disease. In the Lancashire market town of Bolton in the mid-seventeenth century, measles may have killed around fifteen per cent of all the children baptised between 1633 and 1656, a factor that has encouraged Alan Dyer to emphasise the prominent role played by the disease in raising mortality during the seventeenth century.⁶⁸

It is this largely dismal image of early modern society that has informed a great deal of modern scholarship on population growth, with annual totals of marriages and births offering little information of sufficient interest to rival the unpredictable surges of mortality that could sweep away a quarter or even a third of an entire community within a matter of weeks. However, while England experienced at least seventeen periods of disease-related crisis mortality between 1500 and 1670, either single years or as part of a sequence, Paul Slack is unable to attribute more than a temporary effect to high epidemic mortality during the early modern period.⁶⁹ Lee too argues that while the positive check did exist, mortality was less a controlling factor and more a disruptive one.⁷⁰ Increased mortality had the capacity to reduce population size, but it could also stimulate the birth rate in order to compensate for the deaths caused. In Bolton, for example, the number of baptisms recorded for the years immediately following measles epidemics was abnormally high, in each case the total of the “unexpected” births roughly equalling the total of burials attributable to measles, even though most of the additional births under these circumstances did not take place among bereaved parents. Measuring the replacement value of such births is difficult, since there was usually a trough in conceptions after the initial wave, but much of the effect of the loss could have been balanced by the flux of subsequent pregnancies.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Dyer, “Epidemics”, 41, 39. When his serving maid became ill with a rash in 1664, for example, Samuel Pepys was unsure of the diagnosis: “My little Guirle Susan in fallen sick of the measles we fear or at least of a scarlet feavour”. See R.C. Latham and W. Mathews, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Volume V, 1664* (1971), 318.

⁶⁸ Dyer, “Epidemics”, 40, 42, 44.

⁶⁹ Slack, *Impact*, 59, 187.

⁷⁰ R. Lee, “Models of Pre-Industrial Population Dynamics with Application to England”, in C. Tilly, ed., *Historical Studies of Changing Fertility* (Princeton, 1978), 185.

⁷¹ Dyer, “Epidemics”, 42-3.

The role of increased fertility in counteracting the worst effects of disease has received attention from a number of other scholars, the earliest of whom was John Graunt. Graunt's work on the London Bills of Mortality revealed the negative nature of London's demographic profile - burials far outstripped christenings - but his discovery that the balance between these two in the surrounding countryside was more heavily weighted towards the latter allowed him to remain optimistic about the capital's capacity for recovery: "The greatest Plagues of the City are equally and quickly repaired from the country".⁷² Moreover, the process of recovery Graunt identified appeared swift regardless of the strength of the pathogen in question: "Let the Mortality be what it will, the City repairs its loss of Inhabitants within two years".⁷³ Despite the damning evidence of natural decrease in London and other towns and cities such as Winchester and Lincoln, Graunt felt justified in concluding in 1662 that because of the high levels of fertility in the countryside at large, "The People of the whole Nation do increase".⁷⁴

Though Graunt's optimism now appears to have been somewhat misplaced, more recent research has revealed the resilient nature of early modern communities prior to the mid-seventeenth century. The work of Doolittle on the records of the parish of St. Leonard's in Colchester has shown that the number of baptisms recovered rapidly after the plagues of 1597, 1603 and 1631, returning to pre-plague levels within two years of the epidemics.⁷⁵ Manchester, too, demonstrated remarkable tenacity in recovering from the effects of high mortality, and though the epidemic of 1604 in Salisbury wiped out one sixth of the population, within two years adult numbers had been re-established, largely as a result of a localised rural surplus.⁷⁶ The traditional view of urban areas as places of natural population decrease has also come under attack, moreover, as modern studies of Reading, Cambridge,

⁷² Graunt, *Natural*, 320. Graunt noted that his sample country parish of Romsey in Hampshire had a surplus of baptisms over burials for the majority of the ninety years from 1569 to 1658. *Ibid.*, 412-5. Jeremy Boulton too has cautioned against overestimating the importance of plague crises in London, for losses incurred in such outbreaks were quickly replaced. See Boulton, *Neighbourhood*, 47.

⁷³ Graunt, *Natural*, 368.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁷⁵ I.G. Doolittle, "The Effects of the Plague on a Provincial Town in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *Medical History*, 19 (1975): 237.

⁷⁶ T.S. Willan, "Plague in Perspective: The Case of Manchester in 1605", *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 135 (1983): 39; S.J. Wright, "Family Life and Society in Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Century Salisbury", University of Leicester Ph.D., 1982, 61-2.

Hull, Exeter, Worcester and Ipswich indicate evidence of natural increase for at least part of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷⁷

Short cycles in demographic behaviour, the result of various types of mortality surges associated with violent epidemics, disastrous harvests, or even wars and revolutions, often instigated appropriate economic and demographic responses. Populations could grow more rapidly after being decimated by disease or famine, even if such growth was of a temporary nature. Higher levels of mortality presented survivors with enhanced occupational opportunities, and may have temporarily increased wages, allowing former demographic levels to be quickly regained through a temporary lowering of the age of marriage, a higher percentage ever-marrying and even increased fertility within marriage.⁷⁸ The responsiveness of nuptiality to scarcity and plenty in the short term therefore constituted a significant feature of the pre-industrial demographic regime.

Indeed the role of mortality in directing early modern demographic movements has been called into question most recently by the work of Chris Galley on the city of York. York experienced three distinct phases of population history during the Tudor and Stuart periods. In the first phase between 1561-1603, York's enhanced role as an administrative centre offered migrant workers the economic opportunities they needed in order to set up home and have families, and as a result fertility was high. Furthermore, since the city remained free of epidemic disease, this was a period characterised by natural increase. The transition to the second phase was heralded by a severe outbreak of bubonic plague in 1604 and the loss of up to one third of the entire population, but the city recovered remarkably quickly. The pattern of migration continued as before, and the number of baptisms had returned to pre-plague levels within two years, as had the number of households. Fertility therefore remained relatively stable during the second phase, falling only marginally over the period from 1605 to 1640 as a whole, and population levels were maintained.⁷⁹

From 1650 onwards, however, there was a natural decrease each year despite the fact that plague was in remission, encouraging Galley to conclude that crisis mortality alone contributed little to the long-term changes in York's demographic

⁷⁷ Cited in C. Galley, "A model of early modern urban demography", *Economic History Review*, 48 (1995): 450.

⁷⁸ For a theoretical approach to the link between mortality and fertility see G. Ohlin, "Mortality, Marriage, and Growth in Pre-Industrial Populations", *Population Studies*, 14 (1960-61), 190-7.

⁷⁹ Galley, "Model", 460, 452-3.

regime.⁸⁰ At the same time infant mortality rates had shifted little between 1561 and 1700, and there was no significant increase in adult mortality. The only substantial change that can be measured was a rise in the sphere of child mortality after 1640, when children were affected by a series of small-scale epidemics, likely from their periodicity to have been viral in nature (e.g., smallpox or measles). But though this rise in childhood mortality may have been significant enough to eradicate any natural increase, it was not, in Galley's view, sufficient to generate the decrease that characterised the third phase of York's early modern population history.⁸¹ This he relates more realistically to a fall in fertility, and more specifically, to a rise in celibacy, occasioned by the existence of deteriorating sex ratios. For economic growth in York had abated in the period immediately following the Civil Wars, and the population of the city had become more feminised as opportunities for women in the service sector expanded. Consequently migratory flows were dominated by females, who found themselves increasingly disadvantaged in terms of the male-female sex balance, especially between the ages of twenty and thirty, the premium courting period. Greater economic independence and a skewed sex ratio therefore militated against marriage for many of York's single women, with the result that fertility entered into a pattern of decline.⁸²

III. The role of fertility

If a consideration of shifts in mortality remains vital for a full and complete understanding of population change in the early modern period, Galley's work on York serves to underscore the greater overall significance that should be attributed to fertility in any analysis of seventeenth century stagnation. As the case of York demonstrates, mortality crises could be accommodated within suitably high fertility regimes as long as these crises were separated by sufficient periods of time; it was only in the absence of appropriate levels of fertility that populations faltered. Such a profile was also characteristic of other early modern communities. Though the short run consequences of epidemic mortality in the rural Essex community of Terling, for example, were considerable, in the long term, mortality did not appear to have operated as the prime agent of demographic control. The changing strategies of

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 453.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 455.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 460-3.

marital fertility and family formation, in the opinion of Wrightson and Levine, were much more significant in affecting the size and direction of population movements.⁸³

An understanding of the potential significance of shifts in the sphere of fertility has been a feature of demographic analysis from the point of its inception, but interest in its proximate determinants - marital fertility, age at marriage and the proportion of women who married - did not seriously arise until much later. Pre-industrial societies were more often assumed to exhibit uniform fertility schedules, for in an age prior to the widespread use of mechanical and chemical contraception, marital fertility was held to be high and constant, and age at first marriage - following literary precedents and elite group example - relatively young.⁸⁴ Marriage was considered the normal state for sexually active females, and the strength of the marriage discourse in the Tudor and Stuart period was sufficiently influential to encourage many historians to believe that few women in the pre-industrial era would have remained permanently celibate. Even as late as the 1950s, admittedly when few comparative data on fertility practices had become available, demographers were still widely of the opinion that scarcely any women reached the end of their childbearing period unmarried. Moreover, where they did so, the causes were largely considered to be beyond their control. In the wake of two devastating global conflicts, the presence of an imbalance between the sexes - resulting largely from the greater percentage of males who died in battle - was considered to be the most salient factor of in explanations of high rates of female celibacy.⁸⁵

The first challenge to the concept of historically uniform fertility schedules arose out of early anthropological investigation. Studies of a number of traditional, non-western societies revealed that fertility patterns may not necessarily have been high and static, but subject instead to wide cross-cultural differentiation. Fertility itself was bounded by a number of institutional, environmental and personal controls:

⁸³ Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty*, 72.

⁸⁴ Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* provides perhaps the most famous literary example of an early age at first marriage, and during the Tudor period the bulk of women who were members of the British peerage married as teenagers. See T. Hollingsworth, "The Demography of the British Peerage", *Population Studies*, 18 (Supplement to 1964): Table 6, 15. In 1636 Sir Edmund Verney married his sixteen year old son Ralph to Mary Blacknall, a thirteen year old heiress, having purchased the right to do so for £1, 000 from the Court of Wards. Such abuses were finally brought to an end in 1646 when the Court was abolished. See S.E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England The Cultural World of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), 115; R.A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (1984), 219-20.

⁸⁵D.E.C. Eversley, "Population, Economy and Society", in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, eds., *Population in History* (1965), 39.

the ability to conceive could be inhibited by poor health and nutrition; the probability of conception could be reduced by prolonged breast-feeding or social or religious taboos on intercourse; and the proportion of abortions, miscarriages or stillbirths too could vary from culture to culture. The effects of these factors alone, however, did not appear to be of sufficient weight to explain every existing fertility variant, for even in societies in which deliberate attempts to control conception appeared to be absent, levels of population growth were not consistent with high and unchanging fertility patterns. The answer clearly lay elsewhere.

H.J. Habakkuk's article in 1953, stimulated by the work of Ken Connell on pre-famine Ireland, may be said to have marked the revival of current historical interest in fertility as a vital determinant of English demographic change.⁸⁶ Habakkuk made it clear that in the long run he believed the marriage process exhibited the most regulatory weight: the rate of growth of any given population in a normal year (free from war, famine and epidemic) was defined by age at marriage and proportions remaining unmarried, and where contemporaneous societies differed widely in their levels of growth it was predominantly the result of differences on these points. J.T. Krause, too, offered evidence in support of this claim.⁸⁷ Proving these factors to be of principal significance before the onset of civil registration, however, required the presence of additional empirical material. Part of the reason for the almost exclusive concentration of academic interest on the positive check mechanism prior to the 1950s had arisen out of the inability of historians to uncover demographic evidence of sufficient weight to validate the role of fertility. Although England is fortunate in possessing documentary evidence of baptisms, marriages and burials in the form of parish register entries stretching back in some cases as far as 1538, previous work on this material by the nineteenth-century statistician John Rickman was considered by many historians to be "built on such shifting sands as to make them virtually unacceptable for the purposes of modern scholarship".⁸⁸ The need for more reliable information on secular fluctuations in fertility remained pressing.

The 1960s ushered in a new era of demographic investigation with the introduction and application of two specialised statistical techniques created and

⁸⁶ H.J. Habakkuk, "English Population in the Eighteenth Century", *ibid.*, 269-284; K.H. Connell, *The Population of Ireland 1750-1845* (Oxford, 1950), 248.

⁸⁷ J.T. Krause, "Changes in English Fertility and Mortality 1781-1850", *Economic History Review*, 11 (1958-9): 52-70.

adapted by a group of demographic historians based in Cambridge. The Cambridge Group, as they later became known, aimed to reconstruct population movements over a period of over three centuries beginning with the introduction of parish registration in 1538.⁸⁹ Through application of the two new methods - back projection and family reconstitution - the group sought to throw valuable light on the annual tempo of life, isolating patterns of disease and famine, infant and maternal mortality, marriage, migration and even economic difficulty, in addition to estimating national population levels over the course of more than three hundred years.⁹⁰ The first technique - back projection, or a method of estimating the size of the human stock in reverse from pre-existing data through the addition of deaths and the subtraction of births - was created and developed in England. As William Petty had so appositely indicated, "Without the knowledge of the true number of people as a Principle, the whole scope and use of the keeping Bills of Births and Burials is impaired; wherefore by laborious Conjectures and Calculations to deduce the number of People from the Births and Burials may be Ingenious, but very preposterous."⁹¹ But it was the application of the second technique - family reconstitution, or the rebuilding of complete families from parish register entries (devised and pioneered by the French demographer Louis Henry) - that was to prove most enlightening in terms of demographic enquiry. For reconstitution offered valuable detail on a wide range of fertility related trends, allowing age at first marriage, age at maternity, age-specific fertility, and expectation of life at birth to be set alongside bridal pregnancy, celibacy and remarriage intervals in order to greatly enhance any understanding of population dynamics.

Results were dramatic. With the publication of *The Population History of England 1541-1871* in 1981, the Cambridge Group, under the leadership of Tony Wrigley and Roger Schofield were able to challenge the orthodox view that England had laboured under a mortality-dominated high-pressure demographic regime in

⁸⁸ Cited in R.S. Schofield, "Through a Glass Darkly: *The Population History of England as an Experiment in History*", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985): 581.

⁸⁹ The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure was created in 1964 by Peter Laslett for the purpose of historical demographic analysis.

⁹⁰ The first volume on early modern demographic change, *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (Cambridge, 1981) was based heavily on the reconstruction evidence of 404 parishes. It was largely the work of E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, with the help of R. Lee and J. Oeppen. The follow-up volume, *English Population from family reconstitution 1580-1837* (Cambridge, 1997), which dealt more exclusively with evidence gained from twenty-six reconstituted parishes, did not appear until over a decade and a half later, and was more of a group effort, involving Wrigley, Schofield, Oeppen and in addition, R.S. Davies.

which fertility and mortality were both high and an accommodation between population and resources was secured by sudden sharp spasms of mortality. Instead England in this period can be more correctly characterised in terms of a fertility-dominated low-pressure system, in which the balance between population and resources was achieved through “wide, quiet fluctuations in fertility, which in their downward phase reduced fertility levels to the point where population growth ceased”.⁹² The long historical tradition instigated by Malthus which treats demographic change as secondary to economic circumstance had ensured that the classical economists viewed the variability in the demand for labour over the long term as directly or indirectly determining population trends.⁹³ More recently, this standpoint has received renewed support from the work of Ronald Lee, but the most significant contribution of modern scholarship to this debate remains that of Wrigley and Schofield, who adapted and refined the Malthusian preventative-check mechanism in order to explain the equilibrating tendencies of pre-industrial populations by reference to economic stimuli. In their view the balance between population and resources was characterised by a negative feedback model in which a rise in real income led to increased fertility through an earlier age at first marriage, or more women marrying, and a fall in real income, the reverse (i.e., a higher age at first marriage for women, and greater proportions who never married).

Such a theory had a great deal of plausibility. In the first place, forty-one per cent of the short-run timing of marriages in England could be associated with variations in scarcity and plenty, with high prices inhibiting marriages and low prices encouraging them.⁹⁴ In addition, an examination of long-run movements in real wages and nuptiality indicated a general parallel movement, suggesting secular changes in living standards were followed by similar changes in the proportion of those ever married, and the age at first marriage, although the existence of a sizeable

⁹¹ W. Petty, *Observations upon the Dublin Bills of Mortality* (1683), in Hull, ed., *Economic Writings*, 485.

⁹² Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 451.

⁹³ R.S. Schofield and E.A. Wrigley, “Population and Economy: From the Traditional to the Modern World”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985): 562. See especially the view of Adam Smith that “the demand for men, like that for any other commodity, necessarily regulates the production of men”. A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. K. Sutherland (Oxford, 1993), 80.

⁹⁴ R.S. Schofield, “The Impact of Scarcity and Plenty on Population Change in England, 1541-1871”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 14, (1983): 282. See also Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 421-35.

time lag engendered a considerable amount of criticism.⁹⁵ Wrigley and Schofield did not deny that surges in mortality as a result of disease or dearth formed a vital part of the demographic landscape of the pre-industrial past, but their emphasis, following Malthus, lay in the greater effectiveness of the preventative check rather than the positive in balancing population levels.

The circularity of the argument put forward by Wrigley and Schofield did not pass unnoticed. M.W Flinn was quick to challenge the validity of the “hen-and-egg” scenario in which “the rate of population growth determines the course of real wages; the course of real wages determines nuptiality and through it fertility and the rate of population growth.”⁹⁶ Indeed his own text on Scottish population history reflected his continuing concern with the effect of disease on patterns of growth and his belief in mortality as the principal motor of demographic change prior to the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ Yet while Wrigley and Schofield have accepted that the system of equilibrium may have been “nudged in to action by exogenous fluctuations in mortality”, it remains their firm belief that changes in fertility, operating through the mechanism of marriage were of greater significance.⁹⁸ However, they freely admit that there are difficulties in measuring the relative importance of shifts in fertility and mortality on the intrinsic growth rate of the population, and indicate that the importance of the two variables demonstrated considerable variation during the course of the early modern period. In an attempt to illustrate more clearly the relationship between fertility, mortality and the intrinsic growth rate, Wrigley and Schofield

⁹⁵ Though Wrigley and Schofield indicated a time lag of forty years between movements in the real wage and changes in nuptiality (*Population History*, 438), Goldstone later suggested this was “an artifact of their interpolation and aggregation procedures”. In reworking the data he claimed this lag should be reduced to a more realistic twenty years, and believed that it acted only on the proportion ever marrying. J.A. Goldstone, “The Demographic Revolution in England: a Re-examination”, *Population Studies*, 49 (1986): 6-9.

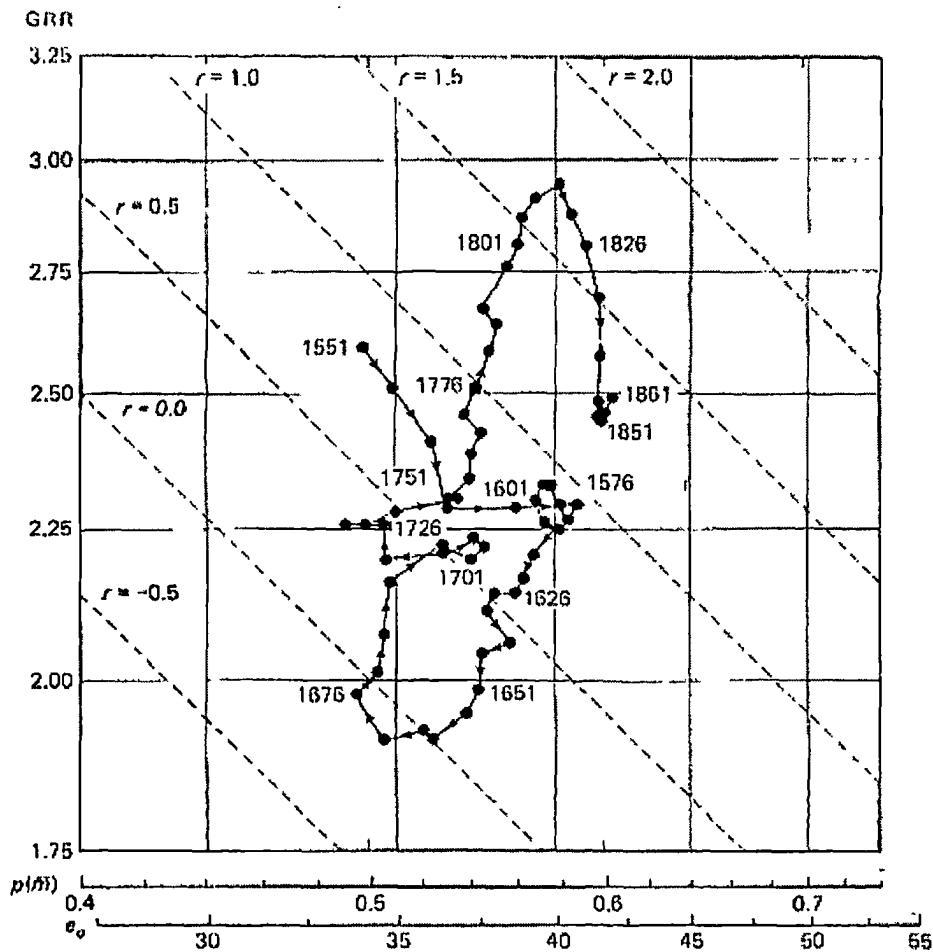
⁹⁶ M.W. Flinn, “The Population History of England 1541-1871”, *Economic History Review*, 35 (1982): 455. Flinn’s article offers a valuable critique of the first volume produced by Wrigley and Schofield. For a critique of the second see S. Ruggles, “The limitations of English family reconstitution: *English population history from family reconstitution 1580-1837*”, *Continuity and Change*, 14 (1999): 105-30. See also E.A. Wrigley, “How reliable is our knowledge of the demographic characteristics of the English population in the early modern period?”, *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997): 571-95.

⁹⁷ M.W. Flinn, ed., *Scottish population history from the 17th century to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), 4. John Hatcher has recently questioned the value of the concept of homeostasis in the Tudor and Stuart periods and called for the effect of mortality on demographic change in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in particular to be reassessed. J. Hatcher, “The Demographic Systems of Late Medieval and Modern England”, seminar presentation at the University of Leeds, School of History, 25th April 2001.

⁹⁸ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, xxix.

outlined the results of their investigations in diagrammatic form, the results of which can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The combined effect of English fertility and mortality changes in determining intrinsic growth rates 1551-1861 (five-point moving averages of quinquennial data).



Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Figure 7.12, 243. The years shown are the central years of the twenty-five year periods to which each point relates.

The diagram reflects an innovative attempt by the authors to demonstrate the relative importance of changes in fertility and mortality on the intrinsic growth rate of the English population. Accordingly, horizontal movements represent the greater relative importance of mortality in this area and vertical movements that of fertility. Thus the

diagram is able to reveal the considerable complexity of the relative relationships between fertility, mortality and intrinsic growth prior to the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, and significantly in terms of the present investigation, it points up the superior role of fertility in determining population levels during the bulk of the seventeenth century. In the first half of the century fertility movements are revealed as the key to demographic stagnation: the vertical distance between 1601 and 1651 is greater than the horizontal distance between these two points. Between 1651 and 1676, using the same methodology, the dominant variable appears to be more correctly characterised in terms of mortality. By the final decades of the seventeenth century, however, fertility once again is the principal motor of change. The relative influence of the two variables in determining the intrinsic growth rate may then have changed considerably over time, but the general dominance of shifts in fertility over those in mortality appears to have been broken only by a twenty-five year period in the third quarter of the seventeenth century.⁹⁹

Surprisingly, while a consideration of the role of fertility has now become axiomatic in any discussion of population change, the relative importance of its individual components at different chronological junctures has undergone significant revision. Information gained as a result of the earliest English reconstitution pointed away from the Malthusian notion of the timing and incidence of marriage as the most influential factor in the seventeenth century demographic slowdown, towards the more significant effects of a shift in marital fertility, when initial attempts at parish reconstitution by Wrigley in the market town of Colyton in Devon led him to suspect the presence of family limitation. His suspicions were aroused by changes in age-specific marital fertility rates, which were high between 1560 and 1629, but fell markedly for the following fifteen years in a decline that became even more pronounced after 1646. Though the mean interval between marriage and first baptism did not change materially in the town during the early modern period, later birth intervals were always higher after 1647 than they had been in the preceding century.¹⁰⁰ This could have been related to changes in suckling practices, brought about either by economic necessity or contraceptive choice, but either way resulted in

⁹⁹ Ibid., 236-45. Though intrinsic growth rates are calculated on a proportional basis, the average decadal crude birth rate shows more variation than the crude death rate between 1610 and 1640, the crucial period for the slowdown of demographic growth. See Appendix IV, Table A4.6.

¹⁰⁰ E.A.Wrigley, "Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England", *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966): 88-91, 94-5.

a steep rise in the mean interval between the penultimate and last birth - a factor indicated by Henry to be representative of a community beginning to practise some form of family limitation.¹⁰¹ In addition, there was a striking change to the mean completed family size - only eighteen per cent of women marrying under the age of thirty and living right through their fertile period between 1647 and 1719 had families of six children or more, in comparison to the much higher figure of fifty-five per cent during the earlier period of 1550-1629.¹⁰²

The idea that some type of contraceptive control over reproduction had existed in this period was not new. In his study of the British peerage published a year earlier, T. Hollingsworth had uncovered a fall in fertility around the mid-seventeenth century of such magnitude as to lead him to suggest the possibility that some means of family limitation, however crude, had been introduced as early as 1650, although he could offer no positive proof.¹⁰³ Studies of primitive material cultures have revealed the use of a variety of methods to restrict human fertility, despite their apparent limitations from a modern standpoint, and techniques for limiting family size in pre-industrial populations were not unknown.¹⁰⁴ In the early fourteenth century, for example, the Franciscan monk Alvarius Pelagius brought an indictment against the medieval peasantry on the grounds that “they often abstain from knowing their own wives lest children should be born, fearing that they could not bring up so many, under pretext of poverty”.¹⁰⁵ Condoms and vaginal sponges appear in the literature of the later seventeenth century, and the story that Charles II insisted upon the former to prevent pregnancy in his courtesans may not have been without substance.¹⁰⁶ Though it remains improbable that condoms were in widespread use before the eighteenth century and even then were more likely to be employed for their prophylactic rather than contraceptive properties, seventeenth century society did have access to a body of contemporary knowledge well-versed on a variety of sexual practices designed to mitigate the effects of conception.¹⁰⁷ Coitus

¹⁰¹ Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 457.

¹⁰² Wrigley, “Family Limitation”, 97.

¹⁰³ Hollingsworth, “Demography”, 51.

¹⁰⁴ E.A. Wrigley, *Population and History* (1969), 42.

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Chambers, *Population*, 69.

¹⁰⁶ E. Chevallier, *The Condom. Three thousand years of safer sex* (1993), 15.

¹⁰⁷ Linking changes in fertility to changing sexual practices is not a prominent feature of demographic analysis, but Tim Hitchcock has offered the increased importance of penetrative sex as a possible reason for fertility increase in the eighteenth century. T. Hitchcock, “Demography and the culture of

interruptus, sodomy and oral sex could have been practised alongside partial or complete abstention from intercourse, and if such techniques failed there was always the possibility of recourse to a range of abortifacients: considerable evidence exists as to the availability and employment of a number of practices designed to induce abortion or miscarriage, which occasionally extended to infanticide.¹⁰⁸

Wrigley's conclusions, however, did not go unchallenged. R.B. Morrow claimed that the decline in fertility between 1647 and 1719 in Colyton reflected a change in marital fertility that could only have been consonant with alterations in the physiological condition of Colyton's population: the plague visitation of 1645-6 appears to have induced a tendency towards uterine haemorrhaging in those women that survived it, a circumstance that frequently resulted in abortion or premature birth.¹⁰⁹ Age-specific fertility rates for women who bridged the plague year did fall quite dramatically after 1646 and the number of childless marriages increased; however, the apparent coincidence of high child mortality and low fertility is consistent with either plague-induced sterility, a scheme of voluntary fertility control, or a combination of both. Furthermore, as Wrigley has indicated, the fall in marital fertility can be dated with some accuracy to 1629 at the very least. Nevertheless, the appearance of an increasing number of completed reconstitutions served only to reinforce the apparent uniqueness of the Devonshire community. Utilising the fertility schedules of fourteen English parishes between 1600 and 1799, C. Wilson claimed to show not only that the prevailing marital fertility regime in pre-industrial England had been one of natural fertility at a low level, but also that it had constituted one of the lowest found in any population before the widespread adoption of contraceptive practices. Though the smallness of the sample prevented the existence of family limitation being ruled out absolutely, Wilson considered it unlikely that it was of any significance in determining overall patterns of marital fertility, given the similarity of experience amongst the parishes in question.¹¹⁰ Variation was not

sex in the long eighteenth century", in J. Black, ed., *Culture and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1997), 69-84.

¹⁰⁸ Contraception, abortion, miscarriage and infanticide are discussed at greater length in Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁹ Morrow, "Family Limitation", 424-6. Creighton, in discussing the aftermath of the Black Death in the medieval period, had already indicated that the plague could affect subsequent attempts to conceive, by quoting a passage from the *Eulogium Historiarum* that appears to indicate the possibility of shifts in fecundability: "the women who survived remained for the most part barren during several years". Cited in Wrigley, "Family Limitation", 92, fn. 1.

¹¹⁰ C. Wilson, "Natural Fertility in Pre-Industrial England 1600-1799", *Population Studies*, 38 (1984): 229, 239-40. Louis Henry first proposed the term "natural fertility" to describe a pattern of marital

entirely absent - evidence suggested a slight urban-rural differential - but the chief characteristic visible across the range of social, cultural and economic environments was one of homogeneity, with every example studied falling within the parameters for natural fertility established by A.J.Coale and T.J. Trussell in 1978.¹¹¹

In the first volume on population history to emerge from the Cambridge Group in 1981 it was therefore assumed that marital fertility was broadly constant in early modern England. Only with the appearance of the second volume in 1997 did the idea that family limitation within marriage had not been a feature of the early modern experience undergo qualification: the use of more sophisticated investigative techniques and the inclusion of additional reconstitutions revealed that marital fertility had in fact risen during the course of the eighteenth century, magnifying the effects on fertility levels of a fall in the average age at first marriage, a decline in the proportion remaining unmarried, and a rise in illegitimacy.¹¹² The main thrust of the change appeared to have been related to the practices of younger brides. For by the eighteenth century women who married at an early age were continuing to have children longer than their later seventeenth century counterparts, encouraging the Cambridge Group to suggest that “the very marked gains in marital fertility towards the end of the parish register period were largely a function of the remarkable rise in subsequent fecundity among early marrying wives”.¹¹³

Ronald Lee has argued that because fluctuations in nuptiality were the result of conscious decisions, and shifts in marital fertility was highly correlated with movements in nuptiality, it seems likely that marital fertility was also subject to some

fertility where the behaviour of the couples does not depend on the number of children already born. See R.T. Vann, “Unnatural infertility, or, whatever happened in Colyton? Some reflections on *English population history from family reconstitution 1580-1837*”, *Continuity and Change*, 14 (1999): 97. Nevertheless this definition can allow the process of spacing children to be incorporated within the realm of natural fertility. As the Cambridge Group have indicated, if couples were to control their marital fertility in a uniform manner over the course of their marriage, then that fertility could still be considered natural. Consequently the concept of natural fertility has come in for considerable criticism, even though techniques devised to measure natural fertility by recourse to the level and shape of fertility curves are still widely employed. See Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 457-8.

¹¹¹A.J. Coale and T.J. Trussell, “Technical Note: finding the two parameters that specify a model schedule of marital fertility”, *Population Index*, 44 (1978): 203-13.

¹¹² Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 449. Between 1700-9 and 1800-9 the average age at first marriage for women fell by two years; the proportions never marrying fell from 112 per 1,000 in the cohort born in 1701 to 96 per 1,000 in that born in 1801; between 1700-24 and 1800-24 the illegitimacy ratio more than doubled. *Ibid.*, Table 5.3, 134; Table 7.28, 260; Table 6.2, 219.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 387. Subsequent fecundity is defined as a measure of the proportion of women in a given age at marriage group who were fecund. *Ibid.*, 360.

measure of voluntary control.¹¹⁴ The implications in terms of the seventeenth century decline and stagnation are then clear: if women had been capable of implementing a deliberate policy of fertility restriction during this period, their predecessors in the sixteenth century, in the same way as their successors in the eighteenth, may have exhibited higher levels of marital fertility.¹¹⁵ Indeed recent scholarship on the Essex community of Terling by Keith Wrightson and David Levine has partially revived the notion of family limitation in the pre-industrial period. Population numbers in Terling were cut back in 1625 when the community was devastated by a serious plague epidemic, but it was the decrease in the rate of replacement after this outbreak, as much as the high levels of mortality during it, that affected population levels in the long-term. The decrease can be explained by reference to a combination of four factors: a slight rise in the age at first marriage; a decline in marital fertility; a steep decline in illegitimacy; and lastly a small rise in the mortality of infants, young children and adults. Nevertheless, the most important brake on the population of Terling, as in the case of Colyton, seems to have been applied by changes in marital fertility: not only did younger brides after 1625 appear to begin the process of family limitation at an earlier age, but at every subsequent parity their rates of age-specific fertility were significantly lower than those of brides in the pre-1625 cohort, with a pronounced fall being visible among women over the age of thirty-five.¹¹⁶

Yet despite the example of Terling and Colyton, on a nationwide basis there is little evidence of a generalised shift in marital fertility. Though levels of subsequent fecundity, highlighted as the chief element of change in eighteenth century marital fertility, were slightly higher in the century before 1650 than the century after, as Table 1.5 below is able to demonstrate, there was no significant upward or downward movement prior to the eighteenth century.

¹¹⁴ R. Lee, "Models of Pre-Industrial Population Dynamics with Application to England", in Tilly, ed., *Historical Studies*, 194.

¹¹⁵ Vann, "Unnatural infertility", 95.

¹¹⁶ Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty*, 63-5.

Table 1.5: Subsequent fecundity of wives at given ages between 1538 and 1837.

Wife's age at marriage	Age 25-29	Age 30-34	Age 35-39	Age 40-44	Age 45-49
1538-1649					
15-19	0.9100	0.7950	0.6625	0.2950	0.0200
20-24	0.9601	0.8731	0.7137	0.3664	0.0598
25-29	0.9887	0.9193	0.7523	0.4377	0.0593
30-34		0.9933	0.9178	0.5481	0.1333
35-39			0.8838	0.4891	0.0239
1650-1749					
15-19	0.8776	0.7485	0.5955	0.2955	0.0276
20-24	0.9453	0.8669	0.7003	0.3596	0.0502
25-29	0.9949	0.9163	0.7416	0.3744	0.0588
30-34		0.9886	0.8155	0.4012	0.0770
35-39			0.9849	0.5482	1.1536
1750-1837					
15-19	0.9342	0.8325	0.7402	0.4547	0.0557
20-24	0.9701	0.8663	0.7489	0.4523	0.0652
25-29	0.9873	0.9227	0.7485	0.4311	0.0706
30-34		1.0000	0.9349	0.5246	0.1103
35-39			0.9543	0.6089	0.1467

Source: Wrigley et al., *Population History*, 386, Table 7.12.

The small shifts in the subsequent fecundity between the late Tudor and late Stuart periods therefore appear to have been incapable alone of facilitating a fertility decline of sufficient magnitude to halt and reverse the course of population change.¹¹⁷

Neither was there any substantial change in the birth intervals between second and subsequent children, nor in the mean age of a woman at the birth of her last child -

¹¹⁷ Levels of sterility also appear to have been reasonably steady. Entry sterility - the proportion of women in a given age at marriage who were not fecund - maintained an essential stability throughout

two of the more traditional measures of marital fertility - over the periods under consideration.

Table 1.6: Trends in birth intervals at all parities except parity 0 (the interval between marriage and birth of the first child) 1600-1699, where the earlier child survives infancy (in months).

Decade	Average birth interval	Decade	Average birth interval
1550-79	31.11	1690-9	32.45
1580-9	32.21	1700-9	31.37
1590-9	33.68	1710-9	31.02
1600-9	31.86	1720-9	32.69
1610-9	32.83	1730-9	31.24
1620-9	32.41	1740-9	31.87
1630-9	32.52	1750-9	31.21
1640-9	33.23	1760-9	30.92
1650-9	32.96	1770-9	30.44
1660-9	33.64	1780-0	30.82
1670-9	32.18	1790-9	30.62
1680-9	31.71	1800-9	31.12

Source: Wrigley et al., *English Population*, Table 7.36, 447.

Average birth intervals, as Table 1.6 above indicates, were greatest during the 1660s, but there was no clear and consistent downward pattern during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to rival the upward movement of the eighteenth. Likewise patterns of average women's ages at the point at which their families were completed demonstrate little evidence of change between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Table 1.7 below reveals.

the three hundred-year period under observation. See Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 383-4, and fn. 17.

Table 1.7: Mean age at birth of last child in years (bachelor and spinster completed marriages only).

Wife's age at marriage	1538-1649	1650-1749	1750-1837
15-19	36.98	36.19	38.62
20-24	38.41	38.19	39.06
25-29	39.31	39.00	39.35
30-34	41.55	40.04	41.17
35-39	40.64	42.11	42.27
40-44	42.94	44.22	44.70

Source: Wrigley et al., *English Population*, Table 7.13, 388.

Amongst younger brides - those who married for the first time before the age of thirty-five - there was a slight pulling back of the age at which they gave birth to their last child between the period 1538-1649 and the following century, but at the same time brides who were over the age of thirty-five when they first married experienced a rise in the age at which they gave birth to their last child. The latter may have been related to the presence of a high and rising age at first marriage that was characteristic of the seventeenth century, but other influences must also have been present. A glance at Table 1.7 above reveals that these gains were maintained into the eighteenth century when age at first marriage began to decline, and were, in addition, accompanied by an increase in the age at which younger brides gave birth to their last child. The role of marital fertility in the demographic adjustment of the Tudor and Stuart periods therefore remains problematic. Though the examples of Colyton and more recently Terling indicate that family limitation was practised in at least two early modern communities, at present the balance of evidence suggests that there was little use of family limitation on a wider front during the seventeenth century, or perhaps more realistically, that there was little change in levels of control over marital fertility among the population at large between the late Tudor and late Stuart periods.

The ineffectiveness of marital fertility in driving fertility movements during the seventeenth century therefore necessitated a shift of focus away from family

limitation towards other variables capable of eliciting a fertility decline, with a second line of investigation centring on changes in the average age at first marriage. The number of children per married couple is to a large extent the function of the age of partners at the point of marriage, and more especially the age of the woman, since fecundity is normally highest during the teens and early twenties, with the mean age at which women bear their last child in European countries usually working out at around forty (although fecundity decreases rapidly for some years before this).¹¹⁸ Consequently in societies in which there is little conscious control of conception within marriage, fluctuations in the age at first marriage are likely to be of considerable significance in affecting reproduction rates: in marriages not prematurely interrupted by the death of one spouse, a rise or fall of one year in the age at first marriage can alter the total fertility of the marriage by approximately seven per cent, and in addition modify the mean length of the successive generation, thus reinforcing the tendency towards acceleration or stagnation.¹¹⁹

Taken in conjunction with pre-existing research on marriage patterns, this has proved to be of critical relevance in the study of demographic change. As early as the mid-1960s, and contrary to traditional assumption, John Hajnal had demonstrated the social as opposed to biological roots of human fertility. Marriage arrangements in England appeared to conform to a specific pattern, characteristic of much of north-western Europe, which exhibited two central features - a late mean age at first marriage and a large proportion of persons who never married at all.¹²⁰ While in Africa and large parts of Asia it was customary for women to marry on or soon after attaining sexual maturity, and for very few to remain permanently single, within north-west Europe the interval between menarche and marriage was frequently long, up to ten years on average, a factor that appeared to be related most directly to the prevailing system of household formation. For unlike the situation in many Eastern cultures, where the newly-marrieds were frequently incorporated either permanently or on a temporary basis into pre-existing kin-based households, marriage in Tudor and Stuart England commonly involved a move away from the family dwelling and the creation of a new household unit, one that was both economically and physically

¹¹⁸ Wrigley, "Family Limitation", 86.

¹¹⁹ Houston, *Population History*, 126.

¹²⁰ J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective", in Glass and Eversley, eds., *Population*, 101.

distinct.¹²¹ Though Hajnal believed his marriage system had been in existence in England from at least the seventeenth century, and may have originated in the sixteenth, marriage, in the view of the medieval historian J.C. Russell, had been linked to the setting up of a new household from much earlier in European history.¹²² While this may have endowed couples with a greater degree of personal freedom, it added a residential dimension to the already onerous requirements of financial independence, ensuring in the process that marriages were subject to greater restrictions than might otherwise have been the case. Hajnal's marriage pattern has been shown by later historians and demographers to be more of a repertory of adaptable systems than a single demonstrable formulation, but its relevance in the context of early modern England remains paramount: age at marriage, no longer linked obdurately to biological maturity, became a movable feast.

Changes in the age at first marriage have proved invaluable in providing the explanatory framework for the growth of population in the eighteenth century. Thus Wrigley and Schofield have argued that the inexorable rise in numbers from around the mid-eighteenth century was brought about primarily through a lowering of the age at first marriage for women, from 26.5 years of age between 1650 and 1699 to 23.4 in the first half of the nineteenth century, although parallel changes in illegitimacy and the proportion ever married (and more recently shifts in marital fertility) served to accentuate its effect.¹²³ Moreover, while M.W. Flinn offered an alternative scenario in which falling age at first marriage and family limitation would co-exist to render changes in fertility null and void, and the limitations of the source material available and the statistical methods employed invited some legitimate criticism, in general the theoretical precepts outlined by Wrigley and Schofield have largely been accepted as the most plausible explanation for the demographic expansion of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, though variations in the mean age at first marriage have become the accepted orthodoxy for the purpose of explaining eighteenth century growth, additional models are required in order to account for the demographic slowdown of

¹²¹ P. Laslett, "Mean household size in England since the sixteenth century", in P. Laslett and R. Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), 125-58; R. Wall, "Mean household size in England from printed sources", *ibid.*, 159-203.

¹²² Hajnal, "European", 134; cited in H.J. Habbakuk, "The Economic History of Modern Britain", in Glass and Eversley, eds., *Population*, 151.

¹²³ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 255. For parallel changes in illegitimacy, proportions never married, and marital fertility, see earlier, fn. 115.

the seventeenth century. Again the experience of Colyton appeared to offer considerable initial promise: the average age at which women married for the first time shifted from twenty-seven in the period between 1560 and 1599 to reach thirty during that of 1647 to 1659.¹²⁴ Subsequent research into the marriage patterns of other early modern communities has revealed that the average age at first marriage for women also moved upwards during the later seventeenth century in Ashby de la Zouche (Leicester), Austry (Warwickshire) and Bottesford (Leicester).¹²⁵ Across the nation as a whole, however, Wrigley and Schofield found little general upward movement in the age at first marriage of sufficient weight to account for the levels of demographic slowdown visible in the early to mid-seventeenth century. The results of the twelve parish reconstitutions available in 1981 indicated only a slight rise in the mean age at first marriage from a figure of 26.0 years between 1600 and 1649, to one of 26.5 years between 1650 and 1699.¹²⁶ The recent addition of a further fourteen reconstitutions has done little to revise the initial findings of the Cambridge Group. Although the age boundaries themselves have shifted, the absolute rise of six months remains the same: mean age at first marriage for women is now thought to have varied from the age of 25.5 at the beginning of the seventeenth century to 26.0 at the end.¹²⁷

The failure of either marital fertility or age at first marriage to fully explain fertility shifts during the Tudor and Stuart periods finally persuaded demographic historians to switch investigation away from a consideration of the nature and timing of marriage towards a discussion of its incidence. As early as 1798, Malthus had signalled the significance of the prudential restraint on marriage, and suggested that it operated “though with varied force, through all the classes of the community”.¹²⁸ By 1965 it had become clear that levels of celibacy, at least among the gentry, had expanded in the course of the early modern period, when a study of the British ducal families by T. Hollingsworth detailed a noticeable expansion in the rate of elite females remaining unmarried at the age of fifty: numbers rose from a figure of 90 per

¹²⁴ Wrigley, “Family limitation”, 87.

¹²⁵ V. Brodsky Elliott, “Mobility and Marriage in Pre-Industrial England”, University of Cambridge Ph.D. (1978), 322.

¹²⁶ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 255.

¹²⁷ Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 149.

¹²⁸ Malthus, *Essay*, 91-2.

1, 000 in the birth cohort of 1550-74, to 238 per 1, 000 in the later cohort of 1675-99.¹²⁹

Confirmation of a similar trend among the general population has proved more difficult to evidence. Though reconstitution studies provide ample information on the variables of marital fertility and age at first marriage, they are unable to offer accurate details of the proportion of the population that never married. It is possible to estimate this proportion inversely using figures for mortality obtained through the process of back projection in combination with an understanding of birth and marriage totals, but the accuracy of figures obtained in this way remains open to question.¹³⁰ Despite this lack of statistical precision, however, the broad patterns of nuptial change have been revealed: the proportion of those who never married appears to have increased dramatically over the course of the Tudor and Stuart periods, from a rate of 147 per 1, 000 in the cohort of 1581 to 270 per 1, 000 in that of 1646.¹³¹ The increase is outlined in detail in Table 1.8 below.

¹²⁹ Hollingsworth, "Demography", 17.

¹³⁰ A full explanation of these problems can be found in Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 257-63.

¹³¹ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.28, 260. Calculation of the proportions that never married depends heavily on a number of assumptions. These are articulated most accessibly in E.A. Wrigley, "Marriage, Fertility and Population Growth in Eighteenth-Century England", in R.B. Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage and Society Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, (1981), 150-55, and are mainly associated with the extent of re-marriage, migration and clandestine marriage. But Wrigley has claimed that even if these assumptions were to be taken to the extreme, the proportions would rise or fall only by about two or three per cent. See Wrigley, "Marriage", 152.

Table 1.8: Estimated proportions of people never marrying by cohort (per 1, 000 aged 40-44) in England.

Year in which cohort aged 0-4	Year in which cohort aged 40-4	Proportion never marrying	Year in which cohort ages 0-4	Year in which cohort aged 40-4	Proportions never marrying
1556	1596	84	1631	1671	181
1561	1601	67	1636	1676	208
1566	1606	42	1641	1681	241
1571	1611	57	1646	1686	270
1576	1616	135	1651	1691	270
1581	1621	147	1656	1696	267
1586	1626	174	1661	1701	249
1591	1631	205	1666	1706	230
1596	1636	229	1671	1711	191
1601	1641	241	1676	1716	185
1606	1646	242	1681	1721	176
1611	1651	236	1686	1726	147
1616	1656	214	1691	1731	128
1621	1661	188	1696	1736	131
1626	1666	171	1701	1741	112

Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 260, Table 7.28. The readings represent five-point moving averages centred on the years indicated.

Moreover, the significance of a rise of such dimensions in the proportion of individuals who did not marry can only be fully appreciated alongside its impact on fertility as a whole. In the view of Wrigley and Schofield, "*Ceteris paribus*, a rise in the proportion never marrying from, say, 8 to 24 per cent, such as took place between the cohorts born before 1570 and those born early in the seventeenth century, would reduce overall fertility by 17 per cent, which is about the percentage by which the

GRR [gross reproduction rate] fell in the first half of the seventeenth century".¹³² Despite their momentous findings, however, the possibility of the existence of a substantial margin of error within the available estimates rendered Wrigley and Schofield more than a little sceptical about the viability of their results. Disappointingly this remains the view offered in the latest collaboration on demographic history to emerge from the Cambridge Group, for while rising rates of celibacy may offer the most plausible explanation for the reduction and eventual stagnation of population in the seventeenth century, they remain cautious in their outlook:

Estimates of proportions never marrying are, in a sense, a residual, derived from information about estimates of the gross reproduction rate, the mean age at maternity, and the mean age at marriage, and are therefore inherently less dependable than a variable that can be observed directly.¹³³

Nevertheless, a number of individuals have sought to evidence celibacy movements more accurately through the use of complex statistical procedures. Among them is D. Weir, whose computer-generated simulations of the pre-industrial period have confirmed the shift in the proportion of those who never married as the dominant force behind movements in seventeenth century fertility, "though not so dominant as would be implied by the celibacy rates estimated independently by Wrigley and Schofield".¹³⁴ By pegging remarriage rates to first marriage rates and holding marital fertility constant, Weir was able to construct an alternative data set that operated to keep levels of fertility consistent with those of nuptiality, a feature of Wrigley and Schofield's analysis that had drawn his particular criticism. The fact that Weir's calculations served to qualify existing estimates, however, had little consequence for an understanding of the overall significance of nuptial incidence in seventeenth century fertility decline. Although age at marriage remains the most critical component of changes in overall fertility during the era of industrialisation, when celibacy levels approached the minimum obtainable, Weir's methodology was

¹³² Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 265.

¹³³ Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 197.

¹³⁴ D. Weir, "Rather Never than Late: Celibacy and Age at Marriage in English Cohort Fertility 1541-1871", *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984): 346.

able to reveal “a clear dominance of celibacy movements [in directing fertility] in the pre-industrial period”.¹³⁵

The significance of movements in celibacy in the determination of overall levels of fertility has received further acclamation in the personal investigations of Roger Schofield.¹³⁶ After making additional modifications to Weir’s data, and extending them to a further twenty-five year cohort, Schofield found that the contrast Weir had drawn between movements in celibacy prior to 1700 and age at first marriage thereafter was even sharper than Weir himself had anticipated.¹³⁷ Schofield’s latest calculations have also enabled him to separate out the proportion of females who never married from the general figure: women moved from a position of ten per cent celibate in the birth cohort of 1566 to twenty-two per cent celibate in that of 1641, ensuring that the generation born between 1630 and 1680 produced the lowest historical fertility ratios so far recorded in England.¹³⁸

Furthermore, while legitimate and illegitimate fertility may be analytically distinct, the forces that operated to reduce the incidence of marriage in the seventeenth century also appear to have induced parallel changes in the related phenomena of illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy. In point of fact, the similarity between movements in bastardy and proportions ever married during the course of the seventeenth century is startling. Though the ratio of recorded illegitimate births to all births did rise in the last quarter of the sixteenth century to peak at 4.3 per cent in the early 1600s, thereafter the illegitimacy ratio fell to its nadir of 1.2 per cent between 1651 and 1660.¹³⁹ There was evidence of a slight recovery in the Restoration period, but as Table 1.9 indicates, figures appear to have remained persistently low for the remainder of the seventeenth century.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ R.S. Schofield, “English Marriage Patterns Revisited”, *Journal of Family History*, 10 (1985): 2-20.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁸ R. S. Schofield, “English marriage patterns revisited: once more”, May 1998, by kind permission of the author, 6-7. Celibacy also had a role to play in depressing fertility in France in the eighteenth century. While around seven per cent of the generation born between 1660 and 1664 remained celibate, by just over a century later (1785-89) this figure had risen to fourteen per cent. See O. Hufton, “Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century”, *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984): 357.

¹³⁹ There were marked differences in levels of illegitimate births between the different regions of England, but the patterns of illegitimacy were remarkably similar. See R. Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester, 1996), 48-64.

Table 1.9: Recorded illegitimacy in England, 1601-1700.

Decade	Illegitimacies	Baptisms	Illegitimacy ratio (%)
1601-10	1, 405	32, 732	4.3
1611-20	1, 240	33, 949	3.7
1621-30	1, 006	32, 836	3.1
1631-40	1, 051	34, 663	3.0
1641-50	691	27, 771	2.5
1651-60	309	25, 517	1.2
1661-70	376	27, 895	1.4
1671-80	459	27, 959	1.6
1681-90	463	28, 118	1.7
1691-1700	576	28, 164	2.1

Source: R. Adair, *Courtship and illegitimacy in early modern England*, (Manchester, 1996), Table 2.1, 50.¹⁴⁰

A similar pattern is also visible in the sphere of pre-nuptial pregnancy. When nuptiality was low in the seventeenth century, and illegitimate births were comparatively rare, prenuptial pregnancy was also unusual, especially among young brides: the proportion of first births conceived up to eight months before marriage according to Laslett fell from thirty-one per cent in the period 1550-99 to sixteen per cent between 1650 and 1699.¹⁴¹ Adair's more recent calculations downplay the extent of bridal pregnancy in the sixteenth century, but do not affect the overall pattern of change. Brides who had conceived up to eight months before their marriage in Adair's reckoning formed twenty-five per cent of all brides in the period 1561-1580, falling to a figure of sixteen per cent - equal to that of Laslett - between 1661 and

¹⁴⁰ Illegitimacy ratios were slightly lower according to Laslett's earlier work, but moved in the same direction. The ratio for 1600-1604 stood at 3.36, and that of 1655-9 at 0.91, the lowest ratio between 1540 and 1830. The ratio then oscillated between 1.23 and 1.52 until the 1690s. P. Laslett, "Introduction: comparing illegitimacy over time and between cultures", in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R.M. Smith, eds., *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (1980), 14.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

1680.¹⁴² The majority of couples appear to have engaged in intercourse only within the context of an expected or pre-existing marriage arrangement, and only when the marriage, for some reason failed to occur, was the union likely to result in the birth of an illegitimate child.¹⁴³ Consequently any increase in the level of celibacy would have the capacity to impact heavily in all areas of fertility, regardless of its legal status; as Wrigley has succinctly argued, “Marriage was the hinge on which the demographic system turned”.¹⁴⁴

IV. Summary

Attempts to isolate the key variable responsible for instigating and sustaining the demographic reversal of the seventeenth century have produced controversial results. Increased rates of celibacy, a high age at first marriage, family limitation and rises in levels of mortality as a result of famine or disease are all held to have functioned to limit or halt demographic growth; include the effects of emigration and the researcher is presented with a combination of demographic determinants that may have operated at both local and national level simultaneously, jointly and cumulatively to ensure a downward demographic spiral. Yet while emigration serves to further complicate the picture of demographic change, for there were times when the net migratory outflow may have adversely influenced national population trends, changes in mortality and fertility appear to have played a much greater part in the overall determination of population movements. The debate has therefore tended to focus around the relative influence of these opposing variables.

Even with the benefit of detailed demographic information the seventeenth century fall and subsequent stagnation remain something of an enigma. Wrigley and Schofield, while recognising the joint contribution of mortality and fertility to demographic change during the early modern period as a whole, have nevertheless signalled their underlying belief in the significance of the more consistent and controlled response of fertility. Moreover, an examination of the relative effects of fertility and mortality over the course of the seventeenth century indicates the greater significance of fertility in affecting the intrinsic growth rate for the bulk of this

¹⁴² Adair, *Courtship*, Table 3.1, 100.

¹⁴³ The relationship between procreative intercourse and marriage is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

¹⁴⁴ E.A. Wrigley “The Growth of Population in Eighteenth Century England: A Conundrum Resolved”, *Past and Present*, 98 (1983): 149.

hundred-year period. The effects of heightened mortality were far from negligible, but cutbacks could be attenuated through the mechanism of fertility, if sufficient time was allowed between outbreaks and economic conditions were favourable.

Nevertheless, while Wrigley and Schofield's model of an economically motivated homeostasis maintained through the mechanism of fertility has received much academic acclaim, there have still been substantial difficulties in isolating and evidencing the relative weight of changes in marital fertility, age at first marriage and the proportions ever married in effecting population change. In the final analysis, however, the most rational explanation for the decline in fertility in the seventeenth century appears to have been related to movements in the latter: the strength of the link between sexual intercourse and marriage ensured that all aspects of fertility, whether legitimate or not, were directed by prevailing levels of nuptiality.

Because marriage for the individual is usually a calculated act, taking into account both present assets as well as future prospects, it may quite feasibly have suffered temporary delay or indefinite postponement during times of extreme social or economic disruption of the kind visible in England in the late Tudor and early Stuart periods. Thus there are strong grounds for believing that the institution of marriage in early modern England "functioned effectively in matching nuptiality, and so at one remove fertility, to secular changes in economic opportunity".¹⁴⁵ The extent to which variations in fertility were introduced exclusively as a result of changes in the real wage, as Wrigley and Schofield argue, will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three; nevertheless the significant role of the incidence of marriage in inhibiting fertility *in toto* remains the key to the population downturn of the Stuart period. Rising levels of celibacy were the fertility dynamic that lay at the heart of seventeenth century demographic decline.

¹⁴⁵ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 435.

Chapter Two

The discourse of marriage

Marriage of all the humane actions of a man's life, is one of the greatest weight and consequence.¹

Marriage "is a state farre more excellent than the single life."²

Wives must be had, be they good or bad.³

Prior to the appearance of Wrigley and Schofield's first volume on early modern population history in 1981 the idea that entry into marriage constituted a normal feature in the lifecycle process for almost all individuals during the Tudor and Stuart periods was widely held. And even after their revelation that shifts in the incidence of celibacy were the most probable cause of the mid-seventeenth demographic century stagnation, implicit in their analysis of economically driven homeostasis was the idea that individuals were only likely to have refrained from marriage during this period if they were in some way prevented from doing so. Wrigley and Schofield are not unusual in this respect; the apparent universality of the desire to marry and the near-apotheosis of its significance in the historical literature of early modern England is difficult to avoid. Thus in the view of John Yost, "Marriage and family constituted the basic social and economic unit and provided the paradigm for all social relations"; Barry Reay describes marriage as "central to English popular culture"; and to Keith Wrightson it appears as a "fundamental institution" of the early modern period.⁴

Historians working from within a range of sub-disciplines appear to have been heavily influenced by the presence of two widely dissimilar but interconnected factors: the physical structure of early modern society; and the extraordinary volume

¹ A. Niccholes, *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (1615), 4.

² M. Griffith, *Bethel: or a Forme for Families* (1633), 19.

³ J. Clarke, *Paroemiologia anglo-Latina in usum scholarum concinnata. Or Proverbs English and Latin* (1638), 328.

⁴ J.K. Yost, "The value of married life for the social order of the early English renaissance", *Societas*, 6 (1976): 37; B. Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* (1998), 31; K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (1982), 67.

of printed literature, both prescriptive and otherwise, on the subject of marriage. In the first instance, the dominant model of household structure suggested by Hajnal in the 1960s, in which predominantly nuclear-type family units contained only one married couple or none at all, was largely confirmed by subsequent empirical investigation.⁵ In the second, the great outpouring of publications offering advice on every aspect of the marriage process appeared to underscore the especial significance of marriage to the individual and society in the early modern period. Yet both were features of a marital discourse that permeated and continues to permeate so insistently through all manner of contemporary material that its influence is difficult for modern scholars to evade. As a result, historical analyses have often tended to take their lead from a common stock of cultural assumptions about marriage that were discursive in nature, often unaware that they too were contributing to the promotion and renewal of the discourse. The fact that contemporaries too were heavily influenced by this discourse is not in dispute. They, even more than their modern investigators, were participants in a cultural dialogue that sought to promote the institution of marriage as a given social norm. A consideration of why and how this was effected then forms the subject of this chapter.

I. The discourse and society

By the seventeenth century few institutions appeared more significant than that of marriage. During the medieval period theologians had laid great stress on the superiority of a life of celibacy and chastity, so much so that celibacy had become the established norm for western Christian churchmen in the Middle Ages, based on the understanding that virginity was the sign of a complete and pure love for God. Medieval Catholicism had not denigrated marriage - the ceremony in fact had enjoyed sacramental status - but the high regard in which pre-reformation Catholics had held celibacy denuded sex, marriage and the family of the social dignity accorded them later by Protestantism. The stress, certainly from the point of Aquinine theology, had been on the maintenance of chastity: the Christian seeking perfection should strive to a life of non-sexual activity. After centuries of priestly monopoly over social ethics,

⁵ J. Hajnal, "Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system", in R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett, eds., *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge, 1981) 68-9. See also Chapter One, fn. 121. Laslett's study of one hundred English communities between 1574 and 1821, for example, revealed that of the 5, 843 households examined, only 39 contained a married child living with spouse and

however, the emergence of the humanist movement signalled a shift away from the spiritual ideals of medieval Christianity towards a more concrete world view, laying the foundation, in the process, for a new concentration on the role of marriage and the family “as a religious way of life which was fundamental to the social order.”⁶ Thus Desiderius Erasmus, in his heretical treatise *Encomium matrimonii* (1518), became the first writer to raise marriage to a spiritual level above that of celibacy. The treatise itself appeared in the form of an imagined argument against a young man who had decided to embark on a celibate life, and in it, Erasmus pointed out that a literal reading of the Bible offered a view of marriage and not celibacy as the superior human condition - the former estate had been instituted by God in Paradise. Moreover, nowhere in his teachings had Christ expressed the view that celibacy should be considered a virtue. Sexual union between a man and a woman, sanctified by God before the Fall, constituted a natural act in Erasmus’ opinion, and was not therefore to be interpreted as sinful. Following on from this it seemed clear that the cloistered existence of nuns and monks held a lesser value in the eyes of God than the secular life of married men and women: “Surely the most holy kind of life is wedlock pure and chastely kept”.⁷

Humanist interpretations of biblical texts, in revealing marriage as a praiseworthy activity, set the tone for the social expediency of marriage as expressed in the literature of the following one hundred and fifty years. But if Erasmus had focused more intently on marriage as being more compatible with the nature of mankind, other humanist tracts were not concerned primarily with the denunciation of the celibate ideal so much as with the social and moral rationale for marriage, a fact not lost on their English translators. J.L. Vives, Spanish humanist and advisor to Catherine of Aragon, for instance, accorded civic importance to the matrimonial estate, envisaging a strong correlation between a good husband and an effective ruler. The reverence for a good husband, Vives believed, extended beyond his household, “into the citie, so that he is taken for an honest man ... and for a wise man”.⁸ H.G. Agrippa, too, believed the institution of marriage formed the very basis for the

married parents, of which 29 couples were living with the husband’s parents and 10 those of the wife. Laslett, “Household size”, 149.

⁶ Yost, “Value”, 26-7.

⁷ D. Erasmus, *A Right Fruitful Epistle ... in Laud and Praise of Matrimony* (1518), tr. R. Taverner (1536?) in J.L. Klein, ed., *Daughters Wives and Widows Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640* (Illinois, 1992), 66-7.

⁸ Cited in Yost, “Value”, 36.

support and continuation of stable government. However his vision of marriage as the key to the survival of both family and commonwealth rendered it not just a necessary action, but the duty of all christian men:

If thou wylte be a man ... if thou wylt occupie the duetye of manhod before other thynges, if thou wilt be the lawful sonne of god, if thou wylt be natural and lovyng to thy cuntry, to thy family, to the commonwelth, if thou wylt possede and enjoye the erthe, and deserve heven, it is necessarye that thou entre the lawfull bonde of matrimony.⁹

Such ideas were incorporated into a system of protestant thought that allowed monogamous marriage to emerge as the lynchpin of the social order in the Tudor and Stuart periods. In the first instance, marriage was capable of providing the religious foundation of society. Philip Stubbes, the puritan pamphleteer, therefore insisted that marriage had symbolic significance, representing “a figure or type of spiritual wedlocke betwixt Christ and his church”, while the royalist divine Matthew Griffith fervently believed that marriage was the only acceptable basis upon which a Christian society could be built: “If we desire to serve God as members of his family ... we must build with God: and to this end we must first lay God’s foundation; which is Mariage in the Lord”.¹⁰ Notwithstanding its religious significance, marriage and the household - as the primary locus of production and consumption, a vehicle for the accumulation and transfer of property, and the locus of patriarchal power - also served as the most fundamental source of economic, social and political order, thereby providing a model for all other social relationships.¹¹ According to the Elizabethan homily on obedience,

Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, earth, and waters, in a most excellent and perfect order. In heaven, hee hath appointed distinct and severall orders and states of Archangels and Angels. In earth hee

⁹ H.C. Agrippa, *The Commendation of Matrimony* (1540), sig. D2.

¹⁰ P. Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), 96; Griffith, *Bethel*, 223. Stubbes ‘puritan’ character has recently been called into question. See A. Walsham, “‘A Glose of Godlines’: Philip Stubbes, Elizabethan Grub Street and the invention of Puritanism”, in S. Wabuda and C. Litzenger, eds., *Belief and Practice in Reformation England A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from his Students* (Aldershot, 1998), 177-206. My thanks go to Steve Hindle for this insight.

¹¹ Yost, “Value”, 37.

hath assigned and appointed Kings, Princes, with other governours under them, in all good and necessary order.¹²

Prescriptive authors like the puritan minister, William Gouge, therefore used analogies of the family and the state in order to legitimate divine and sovereign authority by linking it directly to the authority of the husband in the household unit. A family in his writings was likened unto “a little common-wealth, at least a lively representation thereof, whereby triall may be made of such as are fit for any place of authoritie, or of subjection in Church or common-wealth. Or rather it is as a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned”.¹³ Regicide may have offered a significant challenge to the usefulness of analogies of this nature, but even as late as 1672 it could still be asserted that marriage and the household enjoyed a unique political significance. Together, it was claimed, they offered

a model of the after governments of the World: the dominion of a parent in his Family is a true representation of the government of a Vertuous Prince ... men in this mirour might see the agreeableness of power and Empire; and with better inclinations might become obedient to an universal Head.¹⁴

Though the value of the political analogy between marital and monarchical authority may have undergone qualification in some quarters during the later seventeenth century, the relationship between marriage and procreation continued to draw extensive social comment. Theologians tended to visualise generation more commonly in terms of its ability to expand the numbers of the Church, but the social importance of reproduction *per se* did not escape contemporary attention. A major concern of Erasmus in the early sixteenth century had been to underscore the concept of marriage as a demographic imperative: “Take matrimony away, and within few years mankind shall be utterly gone We see what a rout of diseases, how many casualties, daily and nightly lie in wait upon the fewness of men.”¹⁵ By the later

¹² Cited in G. Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution An introduction to English Political Thought, 1603-1642* (1992), 132.

¹³ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), 18.

¹⁴ B.G., *An Account of Marriage* (1672), 17.

¹⁵ Erasmus, *Epistle*, 86.

seventeenth century, however, the demographic function of marriage, if anything, had adopted even greater political significance, for in the period after the Restoration an increasingly mercantilist philosophy believed neglect of marriage to be capable of jeopardizing the very strength and success of the commonwealth. Political economist William Petty recognised that “fewness of people, is real poverty”, and in the view of Carew Reynel, it was only marriage that stood between a successful country and its destruction: “Upon this property [marriage], families, and civil government depends, also trade, riches, populacy; and without this a nation crumbles to nothing.”¹⁶

However, while shifts in marriage theory arising out of early humanist thought functioned to raise the status of marriage relative to celibacy in the Tudor and Stuart periods, contemporaneous concerns about the problem of unfettered sexual desire rendered marriage a social necessity. “For if any have not the gift of continency”, William Gouge argued, “it is not only commodious or more expedient that they marry, but also absolutely necessarie”.¹⁷ Legitimate procreation may have been of immense value to the political and economic security of the commonwealth, but illicit sexual relationships were considered a moral and financial liability. Commentators across the religious and social spectrum therefore took pains to recommend marriage as a remedy against the sin of fornication: “For help to stay that filthie rage which doth in comber every aige”.¹⁸ The construction of man in his natural state as subject to uncontrollable passions validated the role of marriage as a vital weapon in the battle to maintain social morality. Protestant theologians may have taken a more sympathetic approach to the role of sexual intercourse within solemnized marriage than their catholic predecessors, but the understanding that there was a physiological need for sexual activity remained a cause for concern. Matthew Griffith outlined the nature of the problem as he visualised it - “A man in his naturals, you would not take him for a man but some monster”- and recommended marriage as the most expedient way to avoid all manner of “uncleanness” and sexual danger, which he described with taxonomic precision:

If it be with a married woman, it is called adultery; if with a single woman, it is called fornication; if with one’s cousin, it is called incest; if with either

¹⁶ W. Petty, *A discourse of taxes and contributions* (1689), 16; Reynel, *True English*, 759.

¹⁷ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 212.

¹⁸ W. Elderton (?), “A ballet of mariag” (1573?) in *Tudor Songs and Ballads*, ed. P.J. Seng (1978), 87.

married or single it be done with violence, it is called rape; if it be the sin of Onan, it is called pollution; if between man and man, it is called sodomtry, etc. But call it what you will, and be it what it can, marriage is a lawful and useful way for avoiding it.¹⁹

Yet while men were apt to follow their biological drives, it was the legendary sexual appetite of women that proved most disconcerting. The construction of womanhood in the early modern period was drawn from the two fundamental discourses of theology and physiology, the former followed the Hebraic-Christian tradition of equating Eve with man's downfall, and the latter the Galenic-Aristotelian account of her natural physiology and biological function.²⁰ This powerful combination facilitated the emergence of a view that held all women to be psychologically and biologically pre-disposed to sexual activity, and thus, as the Bible suggested, in need of male control. William Tyndale's early English Protestant text *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, reflected the full weight of his scriptural influences: woman as "that weak vessel" should in his view subject herself to "the obedience of her husband to rule her lusts and wanton appetites".²¹ A century later, such ideas were still in common currency, as uncontrolled female desire in the misogynistic tracts of Joseph Swetnam continued to evoke the spectre of a dysfunctional society - "By her aspiring minde and wanton will she quickly procure man's fall".²² Such ideas were also embedded in legal discourses that sought to secure the orderly transmission of property to the next generation. Thus T.E., the unknown author of *The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights* (1632), in exposing marriage as "the principal safeguard of the family and society" and, most critically, as the guardian of property, justified the need for women to marry by reference to their inherent concupiscence.²³

In the popular contemporary literature, as in the prescriptive, the act of sexual intercourse for a woman was formulated as desirable and pleasurable, and tales of

¹⁹ Griffith, *Bethel*, 240.

²⁰ K. Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook Constructions of Femininity in England*, (1995), 41.

²¹ Tyndale, *Obedience*, 34. Concerns about female sexuality were not restricted to English Protestants. Vives, a Spanish humanist and advisor to Catherine of Aragon, offered a vision of social order that was heavily coloured by his preoccupation with the need for men to own and control women's sexual and reproductive activity. J.L.Vives, *The Office and Duetie of an Husband* (1533?), sig. A5-6, B2.

²² J. Swetnam, *The Arraignment of lewde, idle, froward and unconstant women* (1615), 1.

²³ Klein, ed., *Daughters*, 27-30.

women's sexual prowess were commonplace. *The Lonely Lament of a Lawyer's Daughter for lack of a Husband*, for example, presented a story of a pubescent thirteen-year-old girl pining for a lusty youth, while the fictitious wife in Samuel Rowlands' comic narration *Tis Merrie when Gossips Meete* claimed to have been incapable of enjoying a chaste existence:

I could not for a world have liv'd a Nun:
Oh, flesh is frayl, we are a sinfull sort.²⁴

Ballads told of single women craving "married joys", and of married women craving more of them.²⁵ And according to the subject of at least one seventeenth century chapbook,

Nine times a night is too much for a man,
I can't do it myself, but my sister Nan can.²⁶

Women's enjoyment of sex was very much taken for granted, with male commentators struggling to understand why a woman "would else impair her health ... in breeding, bearing and bringing up of children, if not bewitched to this incredible pleasure excited in coition?"²⁷ Women were perceived as possessing a powerful and potentially destructive sexuality, which, in the words of Anthony Fletcher, rendered them "naturally lascivious, predatory and, most serious of all, once their desire was aroused, insatiable"; consequently fathers were instructed to ensure that their daughters married in good time, because "that Sex is frail, and subject to ruine".²⁸ Thomas Wythorne, Elizabethan musician, at least, was in little doubt as to the nature of women: "Though they be weaker vessels, yet they will overcome 2, 3 or 4 men in the satisfying of their carnal appetites."²⁹ Indeed this contemporary portrayal may have been the root cause of considerable male apprehension, for sexual inadequacy,

²⁴ S. Rowlands, *Tis Merrie when Gossips Meete* (1602), sig. C3.

²⁵ Reay, *Popular Cultures*, 24.

²⁶ A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760* (1994), 66.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (1995), 5; S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), 24-5.

²⁹ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977; abridged and revised edition, 1979), 311. All subsequent references are to this edition unless otherwise stated.

where discussed, was more often constructed in male terms. Metaphors for the vagina were frequently capacious, indicative of male insecurity over providing satisfaction, and ballads such as *A Pleasant New Ballad; being A Merry Discourse between a Country Lass and a Young Taylor; shewing Hoe the Taylor lost his plight and pleasure His yard not being by the Standard Measure* appeared amusingly contemptuous.³⁰ Moreover, court cases that lent support to views of women as sexually demanding served to heighten male anxieties. During a matrimonial dispute reported in 1654, for example, one particular aggrieved wife claimed that “her first husband had done the part of a man twelve times a night, but that this husband had done but eight.”³¹ But women too, were not immune to such concerns. Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle, advised that women should be given instruction on how to temper “their unruly Passions and Appetites”, while the eighteen-year-old Lady Elizabeth Delaval, in the course of her *Meditations*, exposed her powerlessness in the face of her own feelings.³²

Though vertuous love in a vergins heart is no crime yet this new geust which is now come to mine, I find by experience is infinitely dangerous to be entertained, since that passion when once admitted dos so increase that it soon banish's all other thoughts but those only which it is ready to present us with.³³

Having established the value of marriage to the stability of Tudor and Stuart society, the marriage discourse also sought to make entry into it socially desirable by confirming its position as a unique and distinctive social institution. Thus the most salient feature of marriage in the early modern period appears to have been its ability to re-define the relationship between the individual and his or her community - upon entering into marriage, men and women gained adult identity and status, and were allowed to participate fully in the life of their community (subject of course to the more generalised limitations of their gender and status).

³⁰ Reay, *Popular Cultures*, 19; R. Palmer, *The Sound of History Songs and Social Comment* (Oxford, 1988; reprinted 1996), 219.

³¹ Laurence, *Women*, 66.

³² M. Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *CCXI Sociable Letters* (1664), 50.

³³ D.G. Greene, ed., *The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval Written Between 1662 and 1671*, Surtees Society, 190 (1978), 109.

In point of fact, marriage afforded a vital instance of re-definition for individuals of either sex within the context of early modern society, and as befitting its position of social significance, the process of marriage - from the time of the betrothal to the completion of the ceremony - was at heart a public one. Witnesses were required at the initial "handfasting" and at the wedding, and the established church demanded that public awareness of any forthcoming ceremony be raised through the announcement of banns or the purchase of a licence. The ceremony itself represented the highpoint of public involvement, for there was invariably a wedding feast - that of Samuel Pepys, for example, was held in a tavern in Old Fish Street - and guests participated in a range of customary activities such as bedding the bride, flinging the stocking and drinking sack possett, in a process of celebration that may in total have lasted several days.³⁴ Such festivities, which served to establish the relationship of the wife and husband to the wider world and their role and status within it, were characterised in terms of charity, harmony and social unity, and provided a source of pleasure for the whole community. The final entrance of a married couple into the local community was signalled by a ritual of public "installation", as newlyweds took pride of place in their local parish church on the occasion of their first joint visit after solemnisation.³⁵

Men and women did not benefit from entry into marriage on comparative terms, but both experienced a rise in their social position. From a male perspective, marriage became the vantage point from which a man could increase his status and power relative to his single state, and raise his credit and standing within the community. As the head of a household, a man became eligible for local public office as juryman, warden or reeve, and he was also required to fulfil certain civic duties including the payment of taxes. Though the author of *The Lamentation of a New Married Man* chose to depict marriage as the end of youthful freedoms, he was also quick to elaborate on the benefits to be acquired from such an action:

³⁴ R.C. Latham and W. Matthews, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Volume X, Companion* (1983), 316; B. Winchester, *Tudor Family Portrait*, (1955), 66. "Bedding the bride" involved seeing the bride and groom climb into bed together: MacFarlane, *Marriage*, 315. "Throwing the stocking" involved standing facing away from the bride and attempting to hit her by throwing a stocking from over the shoulder. The first to be successful was adjudged the next to be married: J.R. Gillis, *For Better For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford, 1985), 315. "Possett" was a hot milk drink curdled with ale: D. Woodward, ed., *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell 1642* (Oxford, 1984), 309.

³⁵ A "bride seat" existed in some parish churches specifically for this purpose. See Gillis, *For Better*, 75.

A wife hath won you credit,
A wife makes you esteemed,
An honest man through marriage,
Now you are surely deemed.³⁶

In addition to the understanding of marriage as a more responsible and more reputable condition, entry into marriage was perceived to function as a stabilising influence. “Marriage”, according to the anonymous author of one seventeenth-century marriage treatise, “makes men look upon the peace and prosperity of the World, with more concernment and pleasure than those who care only for themselves, and their present satisfaction”.³⁷ Thus the grocer William Stout and his mother and sister, who “were in great concern for our brother Leonard”, decided between them that Leonard should marry, in the fervent belief that this would encourage him to take up a suitable profession and use his time more gainfully. For Leonard - according to William at least - was “outward and spent his time in such company as he could have noe benefit. He would also buy and sell cattle, which is a dangerus employ; and to get him out of such busi[ness] and company we were desirous he should marry”.³⁸

From a female perspective also, marriage offered the expected route to adult status and increased authority. Most women did not enjoy a level of autonomy in any way comparable to that of their male counterparts, but within the confines of the marital home all women experienced to a greater or lesser extent an added measure of power. Their remit, consisting primarily of the day-to-day organisation of the domestic household, required them to oversee the preparation of food, assist in the business or trade of their husband, and provide care and discipline where necessary to the children and servants; many, in the absence of their husbands, confidently and successfully assumed full control of their household or estate, especially during the period of the Civil Wars.³⁹ But in addition to the increased level of respect and recognition women gained as mistresses within their own households, entry into marriage endowed them with added authority and status within the wider community.

³⁶ Anon., *The Lamentation of a new married man* (1625).

³⁷ B.G., *Account*, 24.

³⁸ This was in 1695. In 1697 Leonard dutifully married Elin Benison. See Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 116, 119.

Historians have been able to demonstrate that married women assumed weightier responsibilities in the local power hierarchy, but it was the ability of married women to penetrate into the realm of a status-specific adult female culture that has drawn most historical attention.⁴⁰ For both as wives and later as widows, women were privileged to attend the lying-in period of expectant mothers and accompany them after the delivery as they went to be churched, thus becoming privy to a new social world of childbirth, christening and churching, from which as single women the majority would have been excluded. In the view of Margaret Cavendish, such activities constituted the defining feature of a woman's daily round, whereby newly-married women - at least those among the middling and upper social ranks - could immerse themselves in "labours, christenings, churchings and other matrimonial gossipings and meetings".⁴¹

Entry into the world of the married then signalled a major transformation in a woman's social role, and her necessary distinctness was marked by the existence of at least two symbolic customary practices. Firstly she was allowed to wear clothing appropriate to her status, the archetypal emblem of which was the matron's hood and scarf. According to the diary of Adam Martindale, the apparel of single women was confined to "their felts, petticoats and wastcoates, crosse handkerchiefs about their neckes, and white crosse-clothes upon their heads ... the proudest of them (below the gentry) durst not have offered to weare an hood, or a scarfe ... nor so much as a gowne till her wedding day".⁴² The ability to don specific types of apparel thereby set married women above their single counterparts in the community hierarchy. As the eponymous heroine in Samuel Rowlands' ballad *The Bride* gleefully pointed out to her maiden friends,

I am your better now by Ring and Hatt,

No more playn Rose, but Mistress you know what.⁴³

³⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 310. See also A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel Woman's lot in seventeenth-century England* (1984), esp. ch. 9.

⁴⁰ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 131.

⁴¹ D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), 202.

⁴² Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 131; R. Parkinson, ed., *The Life of Adam Martindale*, Chetham Society, 4 (1845): 6. From Martindale's comments, it appears that by the latter half of the seventeenth century such distinctions were increasingly being disregarded - "now every beggar's brat that can get them [scarves and hoods] thinks [they are] not above her". Ibid.

⁴³ S. Rowlands, *The Bride* (1617), sig. A3.

Secondly, married women were frequently allocated different seating positions within their parish church. Matrons either sat in front of their single counterparts to mark their higher standing in the community, or were granted access to superior church seating where it was available. Moreover, a small but revealing body of anecdotal evidence suggests that such customs may have been strictly enforced: Agnes Bethraye of Souldrop, Bedfordshire who did “intrude her selfe amongst maryed wives in the churche” was required “to forsake the sayd seate, and to syt wher other mens daughters doe syt”; and in Newcastle it was agreed that no church stall “be letten to any man’s daughter except she be handfast, or asked in the church, or else married with a husband”.⁴⁴

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that contemporary male opinion regarded marriage as an essential requisite for social completeness regardless of gender, even though its significance in the female sphere remained uppermost in their minds. Thus in the course of conducting the marriage arrangements of his daughter, Thomas Ridgeway, gentleman, endorsed the view that no one “be properly in the world till they be married, before which time they only go but about the world”.⁴⁵ The opinions of other men, however, were characterised by a more distinctive gender bias. Thomas Cave, country squire and son-in-law to John Verney, claimed that until marriage “women are never well settled here in England”, and for Samuel Rowlands, the early seventeenth century author and balladeer, marriage represented the completion of a destiny that for women had an especial significance: “A wife’s far better than a matchlesse maide”.⁴⁶

II. The discourse and the individual

If the social importance of marriage scaled new heights during the Tudor and Stuart periods, its role in the life of the individual constituted an equally powerful element within the marriage discourse. Therefore, in addition to the fact that it was constructed as a social necessity, marriage for the individual was formulated in terms

⁴⁴ L.A.O. CH P/6 1602, 21; W.H.D. Longstaffe, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, Late Merchant and Sometime Alderman of Newcastle upon Tyne*, Surtees Society, 50 (1866): 260.

⁴⁵ Cressy, *Birth*, 290.

⁴⁶ S.E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England The Cultural World of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), 113; Rowlands, *Bride*, sig. C2.

of two other notions - desirability and inevitability. For the institution of marriage had entered the early modern imagination via the discourse of religion, both as a scriptural truth, and even more significantly, as a stage in the maturation process. Since the Book of Genesis had decreed that a man should leave his father and mother, and “cleave unto his wife”, early modern social commentators were therefore wont to conclude that individuals could not “raise this superstructure [marriage] upon a better foundation than the Divine Declaration”.⁴⁷ In addition, the scriptural model constructed marriage implicitly, if not directly, in terms of the lifecycle process: on entering adulthood it was the duty of every man to forsake the security of his parental home in order to create a new family unit.

The concept of inevitability, as articulated in the Genesis narrative, had wide cultural repercussions. For rich and poor alike, preparation for marriage involved serious long term planning, if not from infancy, then at least from childhood or early adolescence - “Preparation for adulthood”, in the view of the historian Eric Joseph Carlson, “was preparation for marriage”.⁴⁸ A discernible proportion of noble daughters had been promised to their prospective bridegrooms from an early age, and the marriage dowry left to girls of middling and upper status groups by their fathers and grandfathers, which became increasingly formalised during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, often created an indispensable adjunct to their other attractions.⁴⁹ Even illegitimate daughters were entitled to a portion; William Yeman, Bristol glover, left each of his four legitimate daughters £20 when he died in 1573, but his will included a legacy of £5 to “my base daughter” Katherine.⁵⁰ Those without the benefit of unearned income were no less anxious to prepare for the day of their eventual marriage. Young women unlucky enough to be born into less wealthy families may have forgone the prospect of an enviable marriage settlement, but like Sabine Johnson, who invested in her own “hope chest” in preparation for wedlock, their collections of money and possessions, often amassed over a considerable amount of time, were directed towards the specific goal of furnishing and financing a new

⁴⁷ Gen. 2.24; B.G., *Account*, 6.

⁴⁸ Carlson, *Marriage*, 106.

⁴⁹ O. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her A History of Women in Western Europe Volume One 1500-1800* (1995), 64.

⁵⁰ S. Lang and M. McGregor, eds., *Tudor Wills proved in Bristol 1546-1603*, Bristol Record Society, 44 (1993): 22.

household.⁵¹ Even though Mary Bennett of Clotton in Cheshire, may not have been old enough in 1670 to claim her father's legacy, she had already managed to collect a coffer, a flagon, a box, a pair of bedstocks, a pewter dish, a pair of sheets, two bolsters and a coverlet at the point of her death.⁵²

The notion of marriage as a lifecycle event, however, was addressed most keenly towards women, with prescriptive advice on the subject being regularly forthcoming. As the protestant preacher Robert Wilkinson indicated in his formal address to the female wedding guests of the newly-married Lord and Lady Hay in January of 1608, "All the time of your life you have been gathering for this day".⁵³ The expectation of marriage for women was therefore enshrined in any number of personal endowments and bequests. Though young men rarely received their legacies before the age of twenty-one, bequests to female minors were usually appended by an effectual date of majority (sometimes eighteen but more commonly twenty-one), or marriage, whichever took precedence.⁵⁴ Moreover, wherever they appeared in official documents, such as parish registers, testamentary documents or court records, women were invariably identified by their marital status. As a result, women would most probably have visualised their existence, and may, like Alice Thornton, have measured their progress, exclusively in terms of their current relationship to marriage: on the occasion of her husband's death, Alice remarked on the fact that she had passed "through the two stages of my life of my virgin estate, and that of the honourable estate of marriage".⁵⁵

During the medieval period, women who expressed a desire to avoid marriage had been allowed to do so by entering monastic orders, but after the Reformation shifts in marriage theory in combination with the destruction of the monasteries ensured that the social identities of women became grounded more securely in their domestic roles. Moreover the increasing emphasis on the value of marriage shifted the focus of their education away from intellectual development towards the practical arts; "instead of Song and Musicke, let them learne Cookery and Laundrie. And in

⁵¹ Winchester, *Tudor Family*, 66. The box contained a collection of linen, sheets, blankets, furnishings and clothes.

⁵² C.R.O. WS 1670, Mary Bennett.

⁵³ R. Wilkinson, *The Merchant Royall* (1608), 38.

⁵⁴ D. O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint Rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester, 2000), 168-9.

⁵⁵ A. Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton of East Newton, Co. York*, Surtees Society, 62 (1875): 234.

stead of reading Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, let them read the grounds of good huswifery".⁵⁶ A parallel development - discussed at greater length later in the study - which witnessed a decline in the numbers of young girls accepted into trade and craft apprenticeships and the escalation of restrictions on women's employment opportunities, ensured that marriage remained the best possible career for women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵⁷ Personal success, according to M. Slater, was "defined as career advancement for men and marriage for women".⁵⁸ Though a number of trades continued to accept women as of right - the London silk-women's guild offers one example - opportunities for widows were persistently superior to those of spinsters.⁵⁹ The English Renaissance therefore institutionalised, although it may not have invented, "The restrictive marriage-oriented attitude toward women that feminists have been struggling against ever since."⁶⁰

The fact that marriage was constructed as a more significant event in the life cycle of the female was largely the result of the influence of gender roles on the marital discourse - the differences between the two sexes constituted the basic principle upon which early modern society was constructed. Notions about femaleness were discussed in a variety of contexts - medical, religious, scientific, legal and political - but understandings about gender, like those of marriage, were derived principally from the two discursive areas of theology and physiology. In terms of theology, gender roles were attributed on the basis of the Genesis story, the belief that Eve had been created as a mate for Adam, and that her role was to bear him children.⁶¹ Bodies too were fundamental to the early modern notion of sexual difference. Knowledge of physiology in the Tudor and Stuart periods was largely drawn from the works of the classical Greeks, in which men were represented as "the measure of all things", and women as a deviation from the norm, a modified version of the male form designed specifically for the process of reproduction.⁶² Such understandings were transported between all discourses, with the result that a

⁵⁶ Cited in S.W Hull, *Chaste Silent and Obedient English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino, 1982), 72.

⁵⁷ The training and employment opportunities available to single women are discussed in Chapters Three and Five.

⁵⁸ M. Slater, "The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England", *Past and Present*, 72 (1976): 28.

⁵⁹ Winchester, *Tudor Family*, 84.

⁶⁰ L.T. Fitz., "'What says the Married Woman?': Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English Renaissance", *Mosaic*, 13 (1980): 11.

⁶¹ Gen. 2.24; *ibid.*, 3.20.

woman's role as wife and mother became the overarching model of female experience, and crucial in terms of her future well-being. As Sir Ralph Verney solemnly related to his younger sister on the occasion of her forthcoming marriage; "I pray you mistake me not, for this is the weightiest business that ever yet befell you, for in this one action consists all your future happiness in this world".⁶³

The concept of women as wives and mothers received considerable support in the popular literature of the period, with Renaissance drama, in particular, offering a view of women that was extremely marriage-dependent. Whereas in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* the life of a man is represented by a series of seven stages, according to *Measure for Measure* that of a woman revolves more simply around a mere three, those of maid, wife and widow.⁶⁴ Common law too colluded in upholding the estate of marriage for women as the given social norm. According to *The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights*, whether they were married or unmarried, women - as the Bible instructed - enjoyed no legal existence separate from their present or future husbands: "All of them [women] are understood either married or to be married and their desires are subject to their husband ... The common law here shaketh hand with divinity".⁶⁵ Moreover, the idea of marriage for women as a normal feature of the female lifecycle had a natural corollary. Given that women had been created and designed expressly for the purpose of generation, and marriage was the sole means by which such generation could be accomplished, the possibility that women would wish to avoid entry into it appeared eminently untenable. T.E., the author of *The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights* therefore demonstrated his firm belief in the nature of a woman's destiny, and of her singular desire to fulfil it.

Now that I have brought up a woman and made her an inheritrix, taken her out of ward, helped her to make partition, etc., methinks she should long to be married. *Foemina appetit virum, sicut material formam* [A woman longs for man as matter (longs for) form].⁶⁶

⁶² Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 18-21.

⁶³ Slater, "Weightiest Business", 26.

⁶⁴ W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2.7.139-166; idem, *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.171-78. There were other interpretations - Thomas Tusser's *Four Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* divided the ages of woman into fourteen-year intervals - but the more common conceptualisation of the female lifecycle revolved around the idea of marriage. See Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 76-7.

⁶⁵ T. E., *The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights* (1632), in Klein, ed., *Daughters*, 32-3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

The understanding that marriage for women was both natural and desirable allowed it to appear in the guise of a given norm and celibacy as the antithesis of female desire. Henry Bullinger's *Golden Book of Matrimony* had argued in the early sixteenth century that the unmarried, regardless of their gender, were "monsters of nature for their sterility and barrenness [who] die as unprofitable clods of the earth", but the process of discrimination and exclusion utilised in the course of the seventeenth century to isolate those who were single was increasingly directed towards women.⁶⁷ Of particular interest in this context is the ballad literature of Samuel Rowlands. Rowlands' early seventeenth century ballad, *Tis Merrie when Gossips meete* (1602), ostensibly a discussion between a maid, a wife and a widow ranged around the problems and benefits of marriage, opened by exhibiting a clear agenda of support for the conjugal estate. While the naïve young maid claimed to be in no hurry to marry, the wiser and more experienced widow was enthusiastic in her determination to find another husband, and the opinion of the wife abundantly clear:

Maydes must be married, least they mar'd should bee
I will be sworne, before I saw fiteene,
I wish't that I my wedding day had seene.⁶⁸

Having established the concept of the norm, Rowlands then proceeded to outline the fate of any dissemblers, for those who failed to heed such worthy advice were clearly destined to suffer everlasting punishment. As the wife ominously continued:

There's an old grave Proverbe tell's us that
Such as die maydes, doe all lead Apes in hell:
I rather while I live would yeerely marry
Than waighting-mayde on such preferment tarry.⁶⁹

In the final instance, however, it was always possible to appeal to a woman's sense of self-worth and her need for social acceptance. Rowlands' later poetic success entitled

⁶⁷ Cited in Carlson, *Marriage*, 113.

⁶⁸ Rowlands, *Tis Merrie*, sig. C3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. C4.

The Bride (1617) therefore utilised invective and the threat of social exclusion as a weapon against all those who did not defer to the marriage norm, dubbing all women who rejected the prospect of marriage as “fooles”, and defining them in addition as flawed and abnormal:

Aske but your elders that are gone before,
And the’le say marry maide as we have done,
‘Twixt twelve and twenty open love the doore
And say you were not born to live a Nonne,
Unperfect female, living odde you are,
Never true even, till you match and paire.⁷⁰

By establishing marriage as a lifecycle event that was in addition both desirable and necessary, the marital discourse created a norm of adult activity to which all individuals in theory should seek to aspire. Moreover, in articulating the reasons for which marriage had been created the discourse sought to seal individual acceptance and participation in the marital ideal. Thus in an attempt to define the theological justification for marriage, the early protestants had outlined the ends or aims for which they believed marriage had been ordained, and three themes emerged as prominent within contemporary debate. That there was some initial disagreement among Protestants as to their order of significance is clear. In 1528, for example, William Tyndale had indicated that marriage was ordained “for a remedy and to increase the world, and for the man to help the woman and the woman the man with all love and kindness”, but when Henry Bullinger’s extremely popular tract, *The Christen state of Matrimony* first appeared in English in 1541, the author had replaced the primacy of the idea of marriage as a remedy with his belief in the greater significance that should be accorded to procreation; the ability of marriage to provide mutual comfort remained in his estimation the least important of the three purposes in question.⁷¹ Bullinger’s ranking system received immediate and widespread support -

⁷⁰ Idem, *Bride*, sig. C3, C2.

⁷¹ W. Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528), ed. D. Daniell (2000), 110; H. Bullinger, *The christen state of matrimony ... newly set forth in Englyshe* (1546?), fol. vi. Agrippa allocated more weight to companionship. His vision of a socially cohesive society, for example, was formulated around the belief that companionship constituted the primary reason for marriage, since ideally a social

his views were reiterated in the Edwardian Books of Common Prayer, a number of state-sanctioned homilies and in Thomas Cogan's popular medical handbook.⁷² And though marital theory in the Elizabethan period remained in flux, the format Bullinger advocated became enshrined in the conformist Protestant liturgy of the Elizabethan period, and the official aims of marriage emerged in the following order:

One was, the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and praise of God. Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that such persons as have not the gift of continency, might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body. Thirdly, for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.⁷³

These aims had a large degree of individual appeal. In terms of the first aim of marriage - that of procreation - there is a range of documentary evidence to suggest that individuals in the Tudor and Stuart periods entered marriage with children in mind. Medical writers like Nicholas Culpepper not only highlighted the fact that offspring were in demand - "all men and women desire children" - but made a clear connection between matrimony and its issue, largely on the basis of scriptural authority.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the midwife Jane Sharp characterised the desire to avoid having children as an aberration from the norm: "almost all men and women desire to be fruitful naturally, and it is a kind of self-destroying not to be willing to leave some succession after us".⁷⁵ Certainly, the belief that marriage had been instituted for the purpose of raising children was part of the common conceptual understanding. Alice Thornton, for example, envisaged "the blessing of children" as "the chiefe end for which marriage was ordeined", even if, on the occasion of her ninth pregnancy, she

order should be built upon a strong and firm foundation of friendship, companionship and mutual support. Agrippa, *Commendation*, sig. B3.

⁷² J. Ketley, ed., *The Two Liturgies, A.D. 1549 and A.D. 1552*, Parker Society, 14 (1844): 127; T. Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (1584), 248.

⁷³ W.K. Clay, ed., *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer Set Forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, Parker Society, 27 (1847): 217.

⁷⁴ N. Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives* (1675), 68; L. Lemnius, *The Secret Miracles of Nature: In Four Books* (1658) 8-9.

⁷⁵ J. Sharp, *The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (1671), ed. E. Hobby (Oxford, 1999), 128.

had wished it were otherwise.⁷⁶ Moreover, the safe arrival of a child was considered a cause for much celebration, for children were, in many cases, a recognised and welcome adjunct to marriage, often valued highly “above gold and jewels”.⁷⁷ Accordingly, John Johnson and his brother Otwell were delighted to welcome children into their lives, and Ralph Josselin, on the occasion of his wife’s first pregnancy in July 1641, commented that evidence of his “wives breeding ... proved so indeed to our great joy and comfort, blessed bee the name of the Lord”.⁷⁸

The desire to reproduce did not appear to be highly charged with religious significance in so far as there was no great status attached to women on account of the number of children they produced, but there was disagreement over the consequences of sterility. The theological writer William Perkins, who envisaged procreation as the primary purpose of marriage, did not recommend dissolution in the case of barrenness, and nor did the puritan divine William Gouge, but Jane Sharp believed marriages in which there were no offspring were “not lawful by the Laws of God or man, because that procreating and bearing children is one of the chief ends of marriage”.⁷⁹ In addition, the playwright Aphra Behn ventured to suggest that a woman who cannot conceive “begins to mump and maunder at her husband; vaunting much of her own fitness and not a little suspecting her husbands”.⁸⁰ Certainly Sarah Savage appears from her diary to have been deeply affected by her inability to conceive. Though she accepted with resignation the fact that conception was beyond her power to influence, and did not challenge God’s decision to “delay or totally deny the mercy of children to me”, yet still she was unable to conceal her earnest desire for a child; “I sometimes can scarce quiet my spirit as I would”.⁸¹ Furthermore, the casebooks of the seventeenth century astrologer and physician Richard Napier reveal that at least two of his patients claimed to have suffered stress on account of being

⁷⁶ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 101. When she found herself pregnant again in 1667 for the ninth time, Alice wrote, “if it had been good in the eyes of my God, I should much rather ... not to have been in this condition”. See Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 62.

⁷⁷ A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin A Seventeenth-Century Clergyman* (Cambridge, 1970), 82.

⁷⁸ Winchester, *Tudor Family*, 105; A. Macfarlane, ed., *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (Oxford, 1976), 11.

⁷⁹ W. Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie: Or a Short Survey of the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Familie according to the Scripture*, tr. T. Pickering (1609), 117; Gouge, *Domesticall*, 181; Sharp, *Midwives Book*, 127. Gouge argued for marriage amongst the barren on the grounds that they could give sexual satisfaction and may, by some miracle, effect conception. Gouge, *Domesticall*, 181.

⁸⁰ A. Behn, *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage* (1682) and *The Confession of the New Married Couple* (1683), ed. J. Harvey (1922), 51.

⁸¹ P. Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (1993), 82.

slandered as barren women.⁸² Sterility may therefore have been the cause of much psychological trauma, even if it can only be recovered by recourse to anecdotal evidence.

In terms of the role of offspring within the family, there was also much to be said in favour of having children. Yet not all sexually active couples in the Tudor and Stuart periods were able to raise a family. As many as a quarter of all marriages were empty of children in the long term, approximately twelve per cent of which were occasioned by the infertility of one or both partners, with the remainder being attributable to child mortality.⁸³ For the noble household whose family line was at stake, the inability to produce an heir constituted a problem that extended far beyond the realm of the individual, for procreation among landed families had at its root the successful transmission of property intact to the next generation. Lady Willoughby, for instance, writing to her estranged husband in the 1580s after the death of their only surviving son, offered reconciliation in order to effect conception, despite the fact that she was over forty years old at the time. Similar concerns probably prompted the newly married Earl of Huntingdon to consult his uncle in 1672 on how best to penetrate what he believed to be his bride's especially resistant hymen.⁸⁴ Lower down the social scale the need to produce an heir would have diminished in relation to the wealth of the family, but the social benefits of reproduction may have remained a significant element of the discourse. Though children, in Keith Wrightson's view, were not regarded "either as a potential labour force or as a form of insurance against old age", and the unit of obligation during the seventeenth century remained the parish and not the family, formal advice, which had from the sixteenth century prompted children to offer appropriate care to their father and mother, should they "be aged and fallen into poverty" continued to stress that it was the duty of children "to satisfy the necessities of those to whom they owe their very being".⁸⁵ Popular

⁸² M. MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981) 83.

⁸³ Laurence, *Women*, 76.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 78, 75-76.

⁸⁵ Wrightson, *English Society*, 114; J. Ayre, ed., *The Catechism of Thomas Becon*, "Of the Duty of Children towards their Parents", Parker Society, 13 (1844): 358; R. Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1664), 281. The extent of support for the elderly requires a fuller consideration than is offered here. The starting point is P. Laslett, "Family, kinship and collectivity as systems of support in pre-industrial Europe: a consideration of the 'nuclear-hardship' hypothesis", *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988): 153-75. My thanks go to Steve Hindle for this insight.

medical texts therefore offered cures for barrenness that ranged from the prescription of opiates to best way to bring a woman to orgasm.⁸⁶

The understanding that childbirth constituted a vital aspect of the adult female identity was not gender-specific. While Thomas Cave, country squire and son-in-law to John Verney, could insist that a woman's function was defined solely in relation to procreation, Jane Sharp too was convinced of the fact that "to conceive with child is the earnest desire if not of all yet of most women, Nature having put into all a will to effect and produce their like."⁸⁷ Neither did the significance of childbirth in terms of female development arise solely as a result of their gender role, for the process of giving birth also constituted a source of spiritual redemption.⁸⁸ While Eve's transgression in the Garden of Eden had been the signal for all women to bring forth children in sorrow, Elizabeth's belief that God had taken away his rebuke from her when she found herself pregnant with John the Baptist was used as a justification for all women to suffer the pain of childbirth in recompense for the sins of Eve.⁸⁹ In revealing the scriptural provenance of childbearing's redemptive quality, texts such as Henry Smith's *A Preparative to Marriage* in 1591 contributed to the circulation of the understanding that counted it "to the honor of women to beare children, and by consequence, the honour of women to be married".⁹⁰

The construction of women as ready and willing to bear children, however, had further implications in terms of their image and conduct, for the desire to have children translated readily into the desire for sexual intercourse. Marriage had provided the solution to the problem of sexual incontinence in the medieval period, but within the catholic idea of goodness, the concept of original sin rendered the view of all sexual relations in a negative light. Thus Matthew Kellison, regius professor of divinity at Rheims had candidly admitted: "We are ashamed of all carnall copulation, even of that which by mariage is made lawfull, ... Chastitie is more beseeming the

⁸⁶ C.R., *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged*, third edition (1663), 310-11. Galenic theory promoted the idea that women needed to achieve orgasm in order to conceive, for this represented the sole means by which the female "seed" could be released. Ambrose Paré, a French physician whose works were translated into English in the early seventeenth century, therefore suggested that the husband entertain his wife "with all kinds of dalliance, wanton behaviour, and allurements to venery" in order to encourage conception. Cited in Laurence, *Women*, 67.

⁸⁷ Whyman, *Sociability*, 113; Sharp, *Midwives Book*, 75.

⁸⁸ St. Paul's first letter to Timothy indicated that women could be saved through childbearing. See 1 Tim. 2.15.

⁸⁹ Gen. 3.16; Luke 1.25.

⁹⁰ H. Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (1591), 5.

nature of man.”⁹¹ That marriage too could be holy was not in dispute, but within the three states of chastity acceptable to Catholicism, marriage was the least acceptable after virginity and the chastity of widows.⁹²

Early commentators such as Vives, who were heavily influenced by pre-reformation Catholicism, therefore advanced an extreme procreative view of marriage: a husband and wife could copulate without sin only when they did so in order to conceive, for “carnal copulation of itself is a beastly thing”.⁹³ Vives even went so far as to deny the usefulness of second and subsequent marriages, if children were already in existence: “If thou has children already, what needest thou to marry?”⁹⁴ Protestant reformers, however, taking their lead from Erasmus - who chose to define bachelorhood as “a form of living both barren and unnatural”- argued from the 1530s at the very least, that celibacy was no longer a special virtue.⁹⁵ Consequently they advanced a greater acceptance of the role of sexual intercourse within marriage. Sexual activity outside marriage remained problematic - Matthew Griffith, for example, was quick to revile any form of “uncleanness” - but he supported marital intercourse as a normal, natural and desirable event, endowing it moreover with an intrinsic value, aside from its procreative potential: “it should seem that an unmarried man is but halfe a man. And as, among the Jewes, it was ever held reproachful to dye a Virgin; and thence their Proverbe, *Nothing is good but a woman: And He that hath not a wife is not a Man*”.⁹⁶ Whereas pre-reformation Catholicism had proselytised at length on the virtues of continence, even within the bond of marriage, the protestant re-interpretation of the value of marriage had successfully initiated a corresponding re-interpretation of chastity: in the Matthew bible of 1551 (the footnote to 1 Corinthians 7) chastity was no longer constructed in terms of sexual abstinence, but rather as the suppression of sexual lust, unnatural sexual desire (homosexuality, sodomy, incest), and the desire for someone other than one’s

⁹¹ R.L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (1981), 120-1.

⁹² Greaves, *Religion*, 122.

⁹³ J.L. Vives, *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book Called The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1529), in Klein, ed., *Daughters*, 99. Vives wrote from within the humanist tradition, but his text exhibited stronger affiliation to orthodox Catholicism than the work of his friend and fellow humanist, Erasmus.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁹⁵ Erasmus, *Epistle*, 72. When Richard Taverner published the first English translation of Erasmus’ work in 1536, he dedicated it to Thomas Cromwell, counsellor of Henry VIII, who proved instrumental in effecting the dissolution of the monasteries, and with them, cloistered celibacy. *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹⁶ Griffith, *Bethel*, 19.

spouse.⁹⁷ A state of chastity, and by implication a state of grace, was then achievable by “every Christian man and woman, be they married or unmarried”.⁹⁸ Moreover, Protestant writers were able to recommend that sexual activity between the conjugal couple be regular, except at certain prohibited times (menstruation and late in pregnancy), although not excessive. The *debitum conjugale* was still to be done in moderation, “For even in wedlock excesse in lusts is no better than plaine adulterie before God”.⁹⁹

The shift towards a greater acceptance of sexual intercourse within marriage in the religious sphere was a vital element in the reinforcement of the marital discourse. The moral context of early modern England sanctioned sexual intercourse only within the confines of a properly constituted marriage bond, and punishments for extra-marital sexual relationships appear with regularity in the record books of the ecclesiastical courts. Within such a society, where access to pre-marital sexual activity was severely circumscribed, and sexual intercourse formulated as natural and normal, the prospect of legitimate intercourse appeared, in some quarters, as a strong incentive to many to marry. As Sir Thomas More was wont to argue: “That offence [pre-marital sexual intercourse] is so sharpelye punyshed, bicause they perceave, that onles they be diligentely kept from the lybertie of this vice, fewe wyll joine together in the love of marriage”.¹⁰⁰ Though the extent to which individuals entered marriage with intercourse as their primary aim remains open for discussion, Tudor and Stuart society did not appear in any way prudish about legitimate coition. Rather, the bawdy ballad literature and medical textbooks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries assisted in extending a spontaneous rather than guilt-ridden approach to sexual pleasure, often defined as “nature’s way of ensuring generation”.¹⁰¹ Thus while Nicholas Culpeper accepted that one of the main prompts to marriage was the joy of procreation, he could wryly append that “lust is the cause of begetting more Children than the desire of the blessings of God, for where the desire of Children moves one to the act of Copulation, the pleasure in the act moves an hundred.”¹⁰²

⁹⁷ K.M. Davies, “Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage”, in Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage*, 73.

⁹⁸ Greaves, *Society*, 122.

⁹⁹ Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 113. K.M. Davies has argued that Catholic theologians were also arguing that intercourse between husband and wife had value other than for the purpose of procreation. Davies, “Continuity”, 63.

¹⁰⁰ J.H. Lupton, ed., *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More* (Oxford, 1895), 225.

¹⁰¹ R. Porter and L. Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain* (1995), 49.

¹⁰² Culpeper, *Directory*, 68.

It is also clear that while a variety of contemporary mediums articulated legitimate intercourse as a natural and normal part of the human condition, medical knowledge - in asserting the vital significance of ejaculation in the maintenance of general health - raised the profile of sexual union even further. Intercourse itself was understood to represent the mechanism whereby the male and female “seed” - the fluid of both sexes required for the process of conception - was released. Moreover, since the process was a natural one, its absence was understood to encourage a build up of (and therefore an imbalance in) bodily fluids that would inevitably result in illness.¹⁰³ Retention of seed could be highly problematic. “Seed untimely retained”, in the view of John Archer, physician to Charles II, “causeth heaviness or dulness of the body, and if it be corrupted stirs up grievous accidents, all of which can be avoided by Venery but let it by timely and lawful”.¹⁰⁴ However, the phallogocentric approach to sexual pleasure visible in the medical publications of the seventeenth century, and the limited understanding of the causes of amenorrhea, ensured that problems of seed retention reverberated with more vigour in the sphere of female health.

In *The woman's doctor* (1652), for example, Nicholas Fontanus proposed that “wives are more healthy than widows or virgins, because they are refreshed with the man's seed, and ejaculate their own, which being excluded, the cause of the evil is taken away”.¹⁰⁵ His opinion that regular sexual intercourse possessed a preventative capability, which if discounted could prove extremely serious, was also a feature of other medical textbooks of the period, for greensickness or chlorosis, one of the symptoms of which was amenorrhea, was commonly known as the virgin's disease.¹⁰⁶ Characterised by frustration brought on by failure to menstruate and lack of orgasmic release, it appeared regularly in the casebooks of sixteenth and seventeenth century physicians, and John Lange, in the first published account of it, was blunt in his advice that copulation - within the acceptable bounds of marriage - offered the best

¹⁰³ Medical understandings of the body were derived from humoral theory, in which health was determined by four humors (blood, choler, melancholy and phlegm), fluids that moved around the body in response to the requirements of the organs. Each individual had their own natural balance of humors - a “complexion” - and medical practice aimed to maintain or restore this balance. See Sharp, *Midwives Book*, xxxiii.

¹⁰⁴ J. Archer, *Every Man his own Doctor* (1671), 102.

¹⁰⁵ N. Fontanus, *The woman's doctor* (1652), in Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman*, 61.

¹⁰⁶ According to Levinius Lemnius “if women do not use copulation to cast out their seed they oft times fall into great diseases and cruel symptoms.” Lemnius, *Secret Miracles*, 18.

cure.¹⁰⁷ Bunworth too wrote in 1656 that widows and maids were often “thorowly cured” of their mother fits by marriage, and John Graunt, in attributing a rising number of deaths to the “Green sickness” between 1636 and 1660, added that “since the world believes that Marriage cures it, it may seem indeed a shame, that any Maid should dye uncured, when there are more Males than Females, that is, an overplus of Husbands to all that can be Wives.”¹⁰⁸ In addition, such understandings were frequently the subject of contemporary satirical comment. Enforced by war into keeping their virginites against their wills, the female petitioners in *The Virgins Complaint* of 1642, for example, claimed that nothing but sex could cure them of the ills they suffered:

Tis not your glisters
Purges nor blisters
Can make our sickly bodies whole and sound:
No sleepee potion
Nor other notion
Of physick for our sickness can be found:
Only one thing which makes us thus condole,
The oyle of man can cure us in the hole.¹⁰⁹

Discourses of sexuality and medicine therefore constituted powerful subsets of the marriage discourse, since they doubly legitimated the sexual content of the marital estate. But the strength of the marriage discourse lay not merely in its image of marriage as a vehicle for physical satisfaction, but also in its ability to provide the individual with happiness and emotional fulfilment. The third and final aim of marriage as detailed in the Tudor and Stuart liturgy then revolved around the concepts of friendship, comfort and help. Indeed the need for mutual help constituted a vital

¹⁰⁷ Fletcher, *Gender*, 48-9. The seventeenth century obstetric physician William Harvey also claimed complete clinical success in prescribing marriage to a virgin in St Thomas’s Hospital with hysterical anaesthesia. William Harvey published his obstetric handbook *De Partu* in Latin in 1651 and in English 1653. See A. Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (1982), 13, 79.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Mendelsohn and Crawford, *Women*, 25; Graunt, *Natural*, 358. The increase in deaths was actually listed under “the stopping of the stomach”, but since there were no cases of greensickness, which Graunt knew was common, he preferred to believe this, rather than the stopping of the stomach had been the culprit. However, it is curious to note that contemporary records suggested an increase in a disease that was attributed to female celibacy when the proportion of women among the general population remaining unmarried was also rising.

component of the conduct literature. The royalist divine Matthew Griffith, for example, elaborated on the fact that the companionship marriage offered established it in superiority over the single life - "Tis better for company, for comfort, for helpe" - and in the view of the poet John Milton, these factors were of greatest value in the creation of the marital bond: "In Gods intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage".¹¹⁰ That companionship was a major element in the marriage discourse is also clear from other contemporary material. Thus on the death of his wife, Elias Pledger of Little Baddow in Essex considered he had lost the companion of his life, "one that was in every respect a meet help", and Richard Gough, in discussing the marital harmony of Elizabeth and Thomas Ash, two of his Myddle parishioners, attributed it to "a sympathy in nature between them", which enabled them to enjoy "a loving and comfortable life together."¹¹¹ Furthermore, while the non-conformist Richard Baxter may have married late, he and his wife enjoyed nineteen years of "inviolated love and mutual complacency, sensible of the benefit of mutual help".¹¹²

There is also little doubt that romantic love was on the agenda. Love had been upheld as an essential feature of marital relationships from at least the mid-fifteenth century, and from the early sixteenth century onwards protestant reformers such as William Harrington intimated that marriage should be occasioned by the love of the partners involved.¹¹³ There is even evidence to suggest that the link between love and marriage may have been heightened by the development of protestant thought. Accordingly, Ian Watt has argued that the assimilation of the values of romantic love into those of marriage had close connections with the puritan movement, and certainly by the middle of the seventeenth century some conduct literature had raised the value of romantic attachment in driving courtship and marriage decisions above all other factors.¹¹⁴ All of the puritan writers laid emphasis on the value of love in the marital context - William Whately, for example, believed love to be nothing less than "the life

¹⁰⁹ Anon., *The Virgins Complaint for the Losse of their Sweet-hearts*, second edition (1642), 8.

¹¹⁰ Griffith, *Bethel*, 28; J.A. St. John, ed., *The Prose Works of John Milton, Volume III* (1890), 187. The Milton quote is taken from his treatise *The Doctrine and Dicipline of Divorce* published in 1643 after the breakdown of his marriage on the grounds of mutual incompatibility. *Dictionary of National Biography*, CD-Rom version 1.1 (Oxford, 1998).

¹¹¹ Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 200; R. Gough, *The History of Myddle* (Sussex, 1979), 142.

¹¹² Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 200. In the bible, God's initial intention in creating Eve had been as a "help meet" for Adam, see Gen. 2.18. Later Puritans then tended to raise the concept of mutual help above those of procreation and avoidance of fornication in discussions of marriage.

¹¹³ Cited in Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 76.

and soul of marriage” - but by 1642 the puritan divine Daniel Rogers had become so convinced of the heavenly origins of love that he suggested its presence should transcend all other considerations.¹¹⁵

Oftime a secret worke of God, pitching the heart of one party upon another, for no knowne cause; and therefore where this strong lodestone attracts each to other, no further question need to be made, but such a man and such a womans match were made in heaven, and God hath brought them together.¹¹⁶

Prescriptive advice of this nature may merely have been responding to a movement that was already deeply etched into the social fabric. Courtship chapbooks in the collection studied by Margaret Spufford show that the concept of love as the basis for marriage was very much present in seventeenth century society, and other literary genres reflect this interest.¹¹⁷ Poems and ballads discuss at length the various expressions of romantic love and the preoccupation for that most irrational of passions clearly displayed in the twists and turns of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is mirrored in the Restoration plays of Dryden, Wycherly and Vanbrugh.¹¹⁸ The strength of the romantic ideal also received wide expression in letters and diaries. Samuel Pepys, for example, claimed to have fallen so passionately in love with fifteen-year old Elizabeth, his future wife, that he felt physically ill, and Lady Brilliana Harvey, Sir William Mainwaring, and Sir Ralph Verney were among the more privileged members of society who chose to discuss their relationships in highly romanticised terms.¹¹⁹ Lower down the social scale church court cases outline the fact that passionate attachments were a common feature of early modern experience, revealing in the process the extent to which the ideal of romantic love was deeply rooted in the popular culture of the Tudor and Stuart periods.¹²⁰ Romantic

¹¹⁴ I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1963), 155.

¹¹⁵ W. Whately, *A Bride Bush or A Wedding Sermon* (1616), 7.

¹¹⁶ Cited in Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 77.

¹¹⁷ M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (1981), 157. Anon., *Loves Garland or Posies for Rings, Hand-kerchers & Gloves* (1674), a collection of over a hundred small ‘posies’ or rhymes written to accompany the giving of a love token further indicates the strength of the concept of love in the seventeenth century.

¹¹⁸ Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 184.

¹¹⁹ Latham and Matthews, eds., *Samuel Pepys X*, 316; Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 192-4.

¹²⁰ Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 77-8.

attachments were not always the precursor to individual fulfilment - problems related to love and the failure of relationships appeared regularly as causes of mental distress amongst the patients of Richard Napier, the astrological physician - but the profile of romantic love remained high in the spheres of patrician and plebeian culture, fostering the vision of companionate marriage as an ideal to which everyone could and should aspire.¹²¹

III. The significance of marriage in contemporary culture.

For the purposes of clarity, this chapter so far has been concerned to breakdown the effect of the marital discourse into some of its individual and social components, even though it must be understood that these components to a large extent remain inseparable within the confines of a culture in which entry into marriage was as much the concern of the entire community as it was that of the individual in question. As puritan author William Gouge was at pains to point out, “Mariage is a kinde of publike action: the well or ill ordering thereof much tendeth to the good or hurt of family, Church and common-wealth.”¹²² Indeed the full extent of the interaction between the interests of the community over entry into marriage and those of the individual is visible most clearly in the care with which life partners were chosen. Given the enormity of the social and individual value accorded the institute of marriage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and more especially by the church, the fact that a valid marriage could usually be dissolved only through the death of a partner is unsurprising. Two types of divorce, divorce *a vinculo* (total annulment as a result of impediment) and divorce *a mensa et thoro* (separation without the possibility of remarriage), both of which originated in the medieval period, did remain in force throughout the reign of Elizabeth, but from 1604 the ability to obtain the former was revoked.¹²³ The latter could still be granted for partners whose unions broke down as a result of cruelty or infidelity, but since such a separation proved incompatible with remarriage, few individuals appear from the court records to have bothered to present such a suit. Problems of communication combined with the presence of a highly mobile population functioned to allow many

¹²¹ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 240.

¹²² Gouge, *Domesticall*, 204.

¹²³ Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 224-5; M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), 145-9. Divorce was possible for the wealthy from the later seventeenth century by

of those who desired separation simply to abandon their respective spouses with impunity.¹²⁴

Rather than making individuals reluctant to enter marriage, however, the very permanency of the estate gave rise to a rational theory of marital choice that further raised the profile of marriage within the early modern community. Such tactics are easily discernible within the popular literature of the period. Ballads dealing with the problems of married life, for example, attempted to resolve any feelings of general antipathy towards the marital estate by underscoring the necessity for careful selection. In *The Virtuous Wife. A Poem in Answer to the Choice, That would have No Wife* the anonymous author signalled the benefits a husband could obtain through making a discreet choice of partner:

If Heaven would a greater Blessing give,
To Human Nature, Then it is to Live;
I'd wish the Blessing of a Virtuous Wife,
Free from all Fulsome Vice, and free from Strife,
To Crown th'Imperfect Happiness of Life.¹²⁵

Advice on the selection of a marriage partner comprised a major element in the bulk of all early modern conduct material, with most commentators advocating a generalised equanimity of circumstance. Thus Stefan Guazzo's treatise *The Civile Conversation*, first translated into English in 1581, insisted that it was "unseemely" for a young woman to be "matched with a man that carryeth the countenance rather to be her father than her husband", and William Perkins also recommended parity in terms of age: "It is agreable to the rules of expediencie and decencie, that the aged should match with the aged, the yonger with the yonger". In addition, Perkins thought that a similarity of social and economic circumstances would prove most conducive to marital success: "the Prince, the Nobleman, the freeman, the gentleman, the yeoman ... should be joyned in societe with them that are of the same or like

means of an Act of Parliament, however, and wife sales, though illegal, offered other individuals the opportunity to "divorce" an unsuitable spouse. See S.P. Menefee, *Wives for Sale* (Oxford, 1981).

¹²⁴ R. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979), 69. Given the official view on marriage, bigamy was considered a heinous crime, and after 1604 it became a felony. See Ingram, *Church Courts*, 179.

¹²⁵ Anon., *The Virtuous Wife. A Poem in Answer to the Choice, That would have No Wife* (1700), 3.

condition with themselves”.¹²⁶ William Gouge too recognised the need for a significant element of compatibility. “That matrimoniall societie may prove comfortable,” he explained “it is requisite that there should be some equalitie betwixt the parties that are married in Age, Estate, Condition, Piety,” except that it remained “very meet that the husband should be somewhat elder then his wife, because he is an head, a governour a protector of his wife.”¹²⁷

The reality of individual marital opportunity may have conflicted in considerable measure from the suggested ideal, but aggregates of the ages at which bachelors and spinsters married indicates some acceptance of the prescriptive maxims. Thus the average age at first marriage during the Tudor and Stuart periods stood at around twenty-six for a woman, and twenty-eight or so for a man; in addition the mean absolute difference in bachelor/spinster marriages between 1600 and 1729 has been calculated at about five years.¹²⁸ Yet January-December marriages, or unions between those of disparate ages, also received a modicum of support in certain sectors. Proverbial wisdom recognised the benefit of marrying an older partner - “Tis good sheltering under an Old Hedge” - and the author of the pamphlet *Learn to Lye Warm* offered a number of reasons why a young man should marry an old woman, apparently in order to justify his own intention to wed a partner twenty years his senior.¹²⁹ But it was more common to find advice ranged against couples of widely differing ages than in their favour, even though the meagre documentary evidence that is available suggests wider age gaps between spouses did exist, especially amongst those who had been married on a second or subsequent occasion.¹³⁰

Parity of estate is harder to establish. Firstly, there were no legal barriers to marriage across status groups, and after examination of Lincoln marriage licences in the period between 1612 and 1617, Peter Laslett concluded that there was evidence of considerable marital mobility: of the fifty bridegrooms and sixty brides who were described as gentry in the course of his study, up to a third of the men and at least two

¹²⁶ S. Guazzo, *The Civile Conversation*, tr. G. Pettie (1581), “The thirde Booke of Civile conversation”, 2; Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 62.

¹²⁷ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 188-9.

¹²⁸ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 255; Wrigley et al, *English Population*, 153.

¹²⁹ B.A., *Learn to Lye Warm* (1672), opening page.

¹³⁰ Only a handful of local censuses include a reference to age, but marriage allegiances and bonds also reveal a variety of age gaps between couples. See, for example, the index to the marriage allegiances and bonds during the period 1666-91 for the Archdeaconry of London, Guildhall Library (hereafter G.L.) MS9063A.

fifths of the women appear to have married outside their social station.¹³¹ Later research by Keith Wrightson, however, pointed away from a marriage system that comprised considerable social mobility to one involving instead a “great deal of ‘homogamy’”, in which principal social groups married for the most part within their social circles. Even where there was evidence of more extensive exogamy, individuals rarely moved far in terms of social and economic parity, preferring instead to circle within “clusters of intermarrying social groups”.¹³²

Secondly, though parity of estate was certainly recommended, those with social ambitions were more concerned to make a “good” match than to marry their social equals, for marriage served to widen the structure of kinship relations and extend the network of people upon whom an individual could legitimately approach in times of difficulty. James Bankes, born in 1542, who prospered in his career as a goldsmith-banker and invested his money in the north, therefore advised his sons “to make your choies of such wiefes that fereth God and are obedeant to the princes laies and of good parantaige borne, for so shall you therby by strenkened with frends”.¹³³ The rewards of careful patronage could indeed be great. Sir Richard Grosvenor, for example, promoted and consolidated his own status and reputation as leading Cheshire citizen through a network of marriage alliances, the first when he was only fifteen. His own three marriages were to daughters of leading gentry families and in conjunction with the marriages of his sisters and later his children, he was able to create a kinship network that stretched across large areas of southern and western Cheshire.¹³⁴ Such networks could be invaluable at any level, for lower down the social scale there were still measurable benefits to be extracted from a good marriage: *The Diary of Henry Prescott* reveals that Henry’s second wife, Susanna had good family connections, which brought him many valuable and influential friends in Chester.¹³⁵ The matrimonial bond was also employed as a means to effect a political and commercial union between the aristocratic family and its prosperous urban counterpart. The combination of city wealth and landed gentry was a familiar and

¹³¹ P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, second edition (1971), 202.

¹³² Wrightson, *English Society*, 87.

¹³³ J. Bankes and E. Kerridge, eds., *The Early Records of the Bankes Family at Winstanley* (Manchester, 1973), 18.

¹³⁴ R. Cust, ed., *The Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor, 1st Bart. (1585-1645)*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 134 (1996): xiii.

¹³⁵ J. Addy, ed., *The Diary of Henry Prescott LLB, Volume 1, 28 March 1704 - 24th March 1711*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 127 (1987): viii.

accepted phenomenon, and guidance in selective marriage an important feature of the period for those wishing to increase their financial, territorial and social advantage. Within the confines of the capital, therefore, and to a lesser extent elsewhere, the marriage market operated as a mechanism for integrating landed and commercial interests. Parity of estate and condition under these circumstances, however, more realistically reflected the ability of the interested parties to reach an agreement over the relative contribution each partner made than a system of economic and social equality.

Finally, it is clear from Susan Whyman's magisterial survey of the Verney letters that despite the advice of prescriptive literature, class distinctions were not always uppermost in the decision-making process, even though the result of such actions appears to have met with mixed success. Sir Charles Gawdy managed to transcend his social boundaries by negotiating marriage to a countess, but his daughter experienced major downward mobility as a result of her marriage to a stonecutter. The marriage of Sir Francis Compton to "a common whore" also proved a source of considerable concern to both his family and the Bishop of London.¹³⁶ On balance, the fluidity of the marriage market in London in the later seventeenth century appears to have been driven by mercenary rather than romantic motivation. Criticism was then more usually reserved for those who failed financially as opposed to those who married below their social station: the importance of money to upper class marriages constituted one of the most prominent themes in the marriage discussions of the Verney family.¹³⁷

Conduct writers, on the other hand, were unanimous in alerting their readers to the undesirability of entering into a marriage agreement for economic benefit. Though individuals were cautioned repeatedly against making economically unsound marriages, economic motivation *per se* was treated with disdain. Thomas Paynell, translator of the treatises of J.L. Vives, believed that choosing a wife primarily for material reasons constituted a chief cause of social disorder, and throughout the seventeenth century, marriages for money continued to be regularly denounced from the pulpit.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, despite the fact that marriage for economic reasons may

¹³⁶ Whyman, *Sociability*, 125.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 126

¹³⁸ Yost, "Value" 34. Thomas Gataker, for example, recognised that "men are wont to seeke wives for wealth", but advised against it, indicating that "a wise and discreet woman is better that wealth; her

not have enjoyed ecclesiastical recommendation, the act itself was accompanied, in almost all cases, by an elaborate interchange of private property. In the upper echelons of society, this may have extended to a portion or dowry of incredible proportions - those offered by the English peers towards the end of the seventeenth century were in the region of ten thousand pounds per daughter - but even at the lowest social and economic levels the combination of a small amount of cash, some tools, a few household goods and some livestock could mean the difference between security and destitution.¹³⁹ Economic stability therefore remained a key aspect of marital advice across the wider social spectrum, and “a degree of economic calculation” as Keith Wrightson has indicated, was always necessary.¹⁴⁰

While individuals may have chosen to ignore the advice offered in prescriptive texts on matters of money and status, advice on religious parity may have been more successfully internalised. Puritan sympathisers, in particular, appear to have gone to some lengths to encourage religious compatibility as the best basis for marital harmony. Andrew Kingsmill, for example, had vehemently opposed mixed faith marriages in the sixteenth century on the grounds that “the unbelieving wife overruleth the beleiving husbände, and causeth hym either to make a plaine shipwracke of faith, or so cooleth his godly zeale, that hee maie hardely bee disconcerned from an Infidell”.¹⁴¹ During the following century the conduct books of William Perkins largely reiterated Kingsmill’s advice, and William Gouge too decided to publish four pages in the 1634 edition of his treatise *Domesticall Duties* that advised against marriages between people of different faiths, pages that had been suppressed in earlier editions.¹⁴²

This growing insistence on equanimity in the religious sphere appears to have arisen in response to the process of continued religious diversity. Thus at the regular meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, on 20th September 1669, Mary Haggatt, Dennis Holister and Charles Hanford were all admonished “concerning their marriage out of the unity of friends”, and further examination of the Minute Books of the Men’s Meeting of the Society provides numerous other examples of such

price is far above pearls”. T. Gataker, *A Good Wife God’s Gift: And A Wife Indeed. Two Marriage Sermons* (1623), 8.

¹³⁹ R.B. Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage in England 1500-1850* (1995), xvi.

¹⁴⁰ Wrightson, *English Society*, 87.

¹⁴¹ Cited in Greaves, *Religion*, 131.

¹⁴² Crawford, *Women*, 52.

occurrences.¹⁴³ Even within the established church, marriage to those outside the faith was not looked upon favourably: in 1655 Jennet Cunliffe was cast out of her local church in Altham in Lancashire “for keeping company with a Papist, and promising him marriage against the advice of the Church founded on the Word of God”.¹⁴⁴ Concerned parents like Dorothy Leigh and Dr. John Worthington therefore believed it was their duty to advise their offspring to marry only those of a suitable religious disposition, while individuals also took it upon themselves to restrict their marriage partners to within the confines of their chosen religion. William Stout, for example, having had an unfortunate experience with Bethia Greene, who in his view “was solely affected with light and airey company”, resolved “never to marry any other woman than professors of the people called Quakers’ religion”.¹⁴⁵

Though the literature on the subject of marital choice in seventeenth century England is vast and wide-ranging, the most pressing issue in terms of the historiography remains the extent to which the individual or the community at large were more instrumental in directing and controlling the decision-making process. Alan MacFarlane and Lawrence Stone remain united in their view that marriage was essentially a matter for the individual, despite their inability to agree over the point at which such individualism rose to prominence.¹⁴⁶ John Gillis and Keith Wrightson, meanwhile, have argued against the notion that English marriages can be seen purely from an individualistic perspective, and recent work by Diana O’Hara and Steven King tends to lend confirmation to this point of view.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, a central feature of the English marriage system during the early modern period remained the fact that it did not legally require any form of parental consent, nor had it done so for some considerable time. The right of individuals to make their own choice of partner may have pre-dated the Anglo Saxon period, but certainly by the twelfth century this

¹⁴³ R. Mortimer, ed., *Minute Book of the Men’s Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol 1667-1686* Bristol Record Society, 26 (1971): 18-19.

¹⁴⁴ H. Fishwick, ed., *Extracts from the Church Book of Altham and Wymondhouses A.D. 1649-1725*, Chetham Society, 33 (1894): 128.

¹⁴⁵ Dorothy Leigh, *The mother’s blessing* (1616), in Aughterson, *Renaissance Woman*, 100; R.C. Christie, ed., *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington Volume II, Part II*, Chetham Society, 114 (1886): 369; Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 141-2.

¹⁴⁶ Stone has argued for a shift towards greater autonomy of children over the course of the early modern period: Stone, *Family*, esp. ch. 6. Macfarlane believes this had existed from the thirteenth century: A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978), 206.

¹⁴⁷ Gillis, *For Better*; Wrightson, *English Society*; O’Hara, *Courtship*; S. King, “Chance Encounters? Paths to Household Formation in Early Modern England”, *International Review of Social History*, 44 (1999): 23-46.

right had been enshrined in law. Attempts were made to reform the law in the reign of Edward, but it remained essentially unchanged throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, until it was finally revoked upon the introduction of Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753.¹⁴⁸

Courtship could begin almost anywhere, and choice of partner may or may not have originated with the parents. The anonymous author of *The Office of Christian Parents*, for example, clearly thought that such a choice was the duty of caring parents, and his prescriptive text included a special prayer for the parents of those children who were fit for marriage: "That we may see what our child's need is, and make choice of the fittest time, and find out a prudent wife (or husband) for our child".¹⁴⁹ William Perkins too maintained that it was the parents' duty either to provide a match for their children, or to advise them on the suitability of a prospective match, and entries in the diary of Ralph Josselin reveal that he advocated a parental approach to matters of courtship, even though in practice his children initiated the marriage process themselves.¹⁵⁰ The level of autonomy enjoyed by individuals in initiating the process of courtship however, may have been related in no small measure to their social and economic status. The independence of labouring children who had worked outside the home since their early teens ensured that the control a father and mother exerted over their children within this social group was in many cases severely circumscribed.¹⁵¹ Working in service brought young people into mutual contact and leisure time allowed ample opportunity for romantic liaisons: some may have enjoyed impromptu meetings at fairs and markets; others found the local alehouse and its associated community festivities ideal venues for assignations; and others still took advantage of chance opportunities as and when they arose - Margaret Tillotson, for instance, was engaged in the washing of hemp in a brook when her future suitor, Henry Parker, first approached her.¹⁵² Other sources reflect the relative freedom enjoyed in the courtship process at the level of the artisan. Roger Lowe's writings convey the impression of a world in which there were numerous

¹⁴⁸ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 132.

¹⁴⁹ Anon., *The Office of Christian Parents* (Cambridge, 1616), 203.

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Wrightson, *English Society*, 72; Macfarlane, *Family Life*, 96.

¹⁵¹ In addition many parents may have died before their children entered the marriage market. Elliott has suggested that up to forty-seven per cent of daughters in London had lost their fathers by the age of twenty. V. Brodsky Elliott, "Single Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598-1619" in Outhwaite, ed., *Marriage*, 90.

¹⁵² Carlson, *Marriage*, 110.

opportunities for the sexes to meet, and where young people could talk freely and plan their courtships. Lowe himself appears to have enjoyed considerable courtship opportunities; indeed this particular Lancashire apprentice first made marital overtures to Mary Naylor, and then proceeded to make advances - while still engaged - towards her brother's girlfriend Ann Barrow, before finally deciding to marry Emm Potter four years later.¹⁵³

Higher up the social ladder the ability of children to initiate courtship may have been more highly circumscribed, especially in the case of women. As George Saville, Marquis of Halifax informed his female readers in 1688,

It is one of the Disadvantages belonging to your Sex, that young Women are seldom permitted to make their own Choice; their Friends Care and Experience are thought safer Guides to them, than their own Fancies; and their Modesty often forbiddeth them to refuse when their Parents recommend, though their inward Consent may not entirely go along with it.¹⁵⁴

Although crudely arranged marriages that took little account of the opinions of the parties involved were by the late sixteenth century largely a thing of the past, aristocratic parents still commonly initiated matches for their offspring. Courtship among the lesser gentry may have been more usually initiated by the couple themselves, for the social round of the gentry afforded young people considerable opportunities to meet and form attachments away from parental influence, and at middling levels, too, courtship processes display considerable flexibility.¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, upon the marriage of his son on the 9th September 1686, the notebook entry of Reverend Thomas Jolly recorded the full extent of the young man's freedom; "It was his own choice and my consent, I had so far left him to himself that I would not be the wors to him though hee did bring noe portion".¹⁵⁶ Once again, however, the decision-making processes of single women may have been more closely supervised: the autobiography of Alice Thornton reveals that the matchmaking

¹⁵³ W.L. Sachse, ed., *The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire 1663-74* (1938), 20, 33, 119.

¹⁵⁴ G. Saville, Marquis of Halifax, *The Lady's New Year Gift: or Advice to a Daughter*, second edition (1688), 25.

¹⁵⁵ Wrightson, *English Society*, 72-4.

¹⁵⁶ H. Fishwick, ed., *The Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly A.D. 1671-1693*, Chetham Society, 33 (1895): 79.

activities of friends and family were by far the most significant element in her choice of a partner.

Being willing to be advisable by my friends in the choyce of a husband, deeming their judgements above my owne, [I] was perswaded that this proposall might tend to the good of the whole family, and was inclined upon these grand motives and inducements to accept of this motion for Mr. Thornton, contrary to my owne inclination to marriage.¹⁵⁷

Though in theory the consent of parents was not compulsory, contemporary commentators did not recommend marriages without the benefit of parental agreement, and prescriptive writers frequently drew on the precept of the fifth commandment in order to support their case. The author of *The Office of Christian Parents* therefore instructed fathers and mothers to teach their children “their dutie in their obedience & subjection to God, to the magistrate, and to themselves, and namely in this matter of marriage”, and in a similar vein, John Stockwood, schoolmaster and divine, called upon children to obey God and honour their fathers and mothers and submit to their better judgement.¹⁵⁸ Children, in his view, were not permitted to make their own choice in marriage. Other writers, according to Keith Wrightson, displayed “a degree of flexibility, even of ambivalence” in their prescriptive recommendations. Thus in the mid-sixteenth century Bullinger had directed parents “not to constraayne their children to matrimony”, while Perkins, too, made it clear that although it was acceptable for parents to initiate courtship arrangements, they should never force their offspring to marry against their will.¹⁵⁹ Action of this kind, in any case, was rarely necessary. Whereas in theory, religious commentators may not have recognised the right of parents to choose spouses on behalf of their children, the material sanctions at the parents disposal frequently militated in practice in their favour - the need for a sound economic foundation required that individuals consider with due care the role and influence of family and friends. John Lowther, for example, withdrew the land he had agreed to settle on his son William “whoe would perforce marie against my desire”, and Rose Gidney of Sutton in Macclesfield, Cheshire, was prepared to

¹⁵⁷ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 62.

¹⁵⁸ Anon., *Office*, 197; J. Stockwood, *A Bartholomew Fairing for Parents* (1589), 35.

¹⁵⁹ Bullinger, *Christen state*, fol. xiiii; cited in Wrightson, *English Society*, 72.

bequeath her estate to her sister Mary only “provided that she do not marry without the consent and good likinge of my said mother”.¹⁶⁰ The extent to which such punishments were either threatened or enacted once again appears as a function of economic and social status, and varied tremendously according to the age, gender and birth position of the child. Young men and women at the plebeian level therefore seem to have enjoyed most freedom in matters of courtship. Unlike their counterparts in the upper status groups, Amy Erickson claims that men in the lower social ranks rarely placed restrictions on their children’s inheritance by requiring them to marry with their mother’s or guardian’s consent.¹⁶¹

Diana O’Hara has argued that the historiographical emphasis on the relative importance of the parent and child in the matchmaking process “imposes an artificial polarity on what was, in reality, a much more complex matter”.¹⁶² Certainly, the influence of friends appears as a crucial element in the decision-making process, bringing full circle the significance of the marital decision making process in early modern England. Advice from friends was solemnly offered, and expected to be earnestly received. Thus Samuel Pepys thought it notable to record in his diary in 1662 that the daughter of Sir R. Ford was “married to a fellow without friends consent”, and the puritan rector Henry Newcome, married on July 6th 1648 to Elizabeth Manwareing, experienced substantial remorse at having failed to heed his companions’ advice: “I was rash and inconsiderate in this change of condition [his marriage], and sinned in that I took not the advice I should have took of my friends in it; and God might have made it sad to me and done me no wrong; but he very mercifully turned it into good for me.”¹⁶³ Romantic attachments may have occasioned a divergence from best practice, but discounting the advice of friends could prove disastrous. Thomas Martindale, having ignored the counsel of his fellow teachers - “he had so disoblidged his best friends by his marriage”- found himself unable to maintain his comfortable position at the Merchant Taylor’s school, and had

¹⁶⁰ C.B. Phillips, *Lowther Family Estate Books 1617-1675* (1979), 40; Chester Record Office (hereafter C.R.O.) WS 1645, Rose Gidney.

¹⁶¹ A.L. Erickson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (1993), 93-4.

¹⁶² O’Hara, *Courtship*, 32.

¹⁶³ R.C. Latham and W. Matthews, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys Volume III, 1662* (1970), 264; Parkinson, ed., *Henry Newcome*, 10. Newcome’s statement reveals the fact that for him, at least, the denial of good counsel was not merely foolhardy, but sinful, and thus deserving of punishment.

little option but to resign. Without the economic support of his father Adam, Thomas and his wife would have been financially ruined.¹⁶⁴

IV. Summary

Historians may deliberate *ad infinitum* over the relative weight of money, romance and individual freedom of choice in the decision-making process, but what has been largely ignored to date is the full extent of the marital discourse in seventeenth century England. For there was a discernible, influential and self-perpetuating marital culture, operating at the level of the state, the community, and the individual, that served to foster a view of marriage as necessary, desirable, and in the final reckoning, inevitable. The marriage discourse itself widened most notably during the Tudor period as the fledgling protestant church, heavily influenced by the writings of the early humanists, re-evaluated the scriptural authorisation for celibacy and set the tone for the social expediency of marriage for the remainder of the early modern period. In the process, the value of marriage came to reside first and foremost in its ability to legitimate and control sexual activity. This was related in the first instance to its procreative potential, for marriage was recommended as a means to expand and protect the Church and commonwealth. But in addition, marriage offered a solution to the problem of unfettered sexual desire, a problem that resonated with most vigour in the female sphere. Insofar as it formed the basic unit of society, moreover, marriage provided the model for all social relations, the essence of political authority, social stability and economic security. Indeed, the value attached by early modern society to the institution of marriage can be measured at least in part by the system of rewards that was conditional upon entry into it, in which responsibility and power appear as the key inducements. Marriage offered public recognition, increased status, access to positions of authority within the community and a creditable social identity, all of which were marked by a variety of customary procedures designed to raise the profile of the married person within their social setting.

In the individual arena too, marriage appeared as the singular most important means to achieve personal fulfilment. Procreation, for women especially, comprised a vital aspect of adult identity, moreover, the increasing emphasis of Protestant writers on sexual intercourse as a natural expression of marital love constituted a significant

¹⁶⁴ Parkinson, ed., *Adam Martindale*, 212.

aspect of the marital discourse. In a society in which access to sexual activity outside marriage was severely circumscribed - for women at least - the opportunity to enjoy regular and legitimate access to sexual intercourse appears as a salient feature of the marital institution, especially since it was promoted within the context of individual health and mutual love. In addition, the progressive insistence on the importance of romantic attachment in driving marriage choices proved to be an element of key discursive strength, since it drew on the innate sociability of human beings and their need for companionship and support.

But while the methodological approach adopted in the course of this chapter called for a breakdown of the marriage discourse into its individual and social components, the holistic effect of the discourse is exposed most clearly at the point at which the public and the private interest intersected: over the selection of the marriage partner. Divorce may have been impossible for the majority of individuals during the bulk of the Tudor and Stuart periods, but rather than reducing the cultural impact of marriage, the problems inherent in choosing a suitable life partner in actuality reinforced its importance by creating a theory of preference through which the ideal marriage could and should be established. It is clear from the documentary sources that prescriptive advice over choice of partner was not always observed, but the decision-making process, as a function of individual, family and community responsibility, appears as a key factor in maintaining the institution of marriage at the forefront of the contemporary imagination.

The discourse of marriage, bolstered by a range of complementary discursive structures, acted jointly and severally to promote marriage as the institution that was best suited to contemporary existence, in an attempt to deliver permanent and lasting partnerships that were conducive to social stability. Individuals were left in little doubt that the institution had been established for the purposes of procreation, validation of sexual activity and provision of mutual help and comfort, and that by entering the marital estate they were protecting the security and stability of their home, their church and their commonwealth, and in addition were laying a foundation for their own future health and happiness. The fact that the proportion of those entering the marital estate in the seventeenth century underwent decline therefore demands further investigation.

Chapter Three

Economic, social and cultural influences on marriage behaviour

Many indeed (but unjustly) cry out of marriage, as a condition of care and perplexities, and celebrate single living, for its freedom and repose.¹

I have no humour to marry, I love to lie o' both sides o' th' bed myself ...
marriage is but a chopping and changing, where a maiden loses one head and has a worse i' th' place.²

The survey of contemporary literature performed in the previous chapter has suggested a Tudor and Stuart society in which the estate of marriage was consistently elevated above that of celibacy, for the benefit of the individual and of the community at large. Yet despite this proposal, recent demographic calculations indicate that from the late sixteenth century a rising proportion of individuals never entered the marital estate. Such quantitative calculations are lent anecdotal support by reference to a variety of later Stuart documents: in the aftermath of the Civil Wars contemporary opinion, though unsure of the exact extent of the problem, nevertheless was aware of its existence, and sought in addition to explain it. Modern historians too have made concerted attempts to recover the causes of the gradual decline in the marriage rate in the early part of the century. However, the irony of a falling marriage rate within the confines of a society in which marriage had become the singular manifestation of normal adulthood has encouraged twentieth century commentators, like their seventeenth century predecessors, to articulate rising levels of celibacy exclusively in terms of marital failure. As a result they have sought to isolate the factors that operated to raise levels of celibacy within the context of Tudor and Stuart society by preventing individuals from entering marriage, a situation that has been most frequently explained by recourse to economics. It may also be possible, however, that a rise in the number of individuals who made a positive decision to remain single contributed to the decline in the proportion of those who entered the marital estate, for

¹ Anon., *Account*, 35.

the profile of celibacy as a lifelong as opposed to a lifecycle process was a feature of the later seventeenth century literature.

In point of fact a close reading of the printed literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reveals that marriage had never been inordinately advocated for all and sundry, even in the context of Tudor and Stuart England. Though there appears to have been a genuine acceptance of the generalized necessity for marriage, commentators were aware that there were certain categories of people for whom only celibacy could be the recommended course of action. All those intending to marry were required to fulfil the necessary canonical precepts, observing first “the distinction of sex” - couples must contain one member of each sex - and second, the “just and lawful distance of blood”. In addition to the third and usual requirement that the parties be legally free to marry, however, conduct literature also recommended that those intending to marry be physically capable of carrying out all their matrimonial duties. William Perkins therefore suggested that it was unlawful to marry “such a person, as is unfit for the use of marriage, either by naturall constitution of body or by accident. For example; in regard of sicknesse, or of frigiditie, or of the palsie uncurable, or lastly of the deprivation of the parts belonging to generation”.³

Certainly the physically and mentally handicapped were among those more likely to remain single, a fact that may have influenced the nature of the comments appended to a number of contemporary census listings. Thus John Lindopp, fifty-one year old bachelor and hospital man living in St Johns Street, Lichfield, was described on the census listing of 1695 as being blind; Thomas Shelley of Podmore, appeared on the Ecclesall census defined as a lame man, who never married; and Jane Shelley, “A virgin of 30 y[ea]rs old”, who also featured on the Ecclesall listing, had suffered considerable misfortune - with “one arm and one side of her sick with cold palsy and crackbrained, near idiot, [she] can do nothing unlesse perhaps card”.⁴ Occasionally, alternative definitions provide more cryptic insights into contemporary views of single people. Henry March, for example, another hospital man from Lichfield who was still a bachelor at the age of eighty, was referred to by the census compiler rather

²T.M. Middleton and T. Dekker, *The Roaring Girl* (1611), ed. A. Gomme (London, 1976), 2.2.36-44.

³Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 54.

⁴Lichfield, 1695, 17; Ecclesall local census 1693/98, 71-2.

enigmatically as “Maidenly Harry”, a description that may or may not have been intended to explain his celibate status.⁵

Physical abnormality in relation to marital evasion, however, as Perkins earlier statement suggested, was also interpreted in terms of sexual incapacity. High on the list of unsuitable candidates according to the puritan minister William Gouge, therefore, were those unable or unwilling to engage in sexual intercourse: he advised those incapable of performing the “essential” duties of marriage (for whatever reason) never to marry, since “they frustrate one maine end of mariage, which is procreation of children; and doe that wrong to the partie whom they marie, as sufficient satisfaction can never be made”.⁶ The work of Matthew Griffith reiterated such concerns. Those who found themselves frigid from birth, those later rendered impotent, usually as a result of castration, and finally those for whom conscience dictated the retention of a celibate state, as in the case of monks or priests, all, in his opinion had sufficient reason to abstain from entry into marriage.⁷ Occasionally commentators went even further in their analyses. Thus the anonymous author of *The Office of Christian Parents*, in recognising that some men “of a naturall indisposition” would prefer not to marry, suggested instead that they should be allowed to escape the confines of the general exhortation, always providing, of course, that they could embrace a godly and chaste existence.⁸ The same consideration was rarely extended to women. Since marriage was recognised by contemporaries to have been both physically and emotionally demanding, those of a delicate constitution may have been cautioned against it. Ellin Stout, for example, sister of William, the Lancashire grocer and Quaker, apparently had several offers of marriage from men “of good repuite and substance” (her father had left her £80), but according to William, “being always subject to the advice of her mother was advised, considering her infermetys and ill state of health, to remain single, knowing the care and exercises that always attended a married life, and the hazerd of hapiness in it.”⁹ Nevertheless such advice was likely

⁵ Lichfield, 1695, 17.

⁶ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 181.

⁷ Griffith, *Bethel*, 22-3. Griffith took his lead directly from the Bible. Jesus described three situations in which celibacy was lawful: “For there are some eunuchs, which were born so from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” See Matt. 19.12.

⁸ Anon., *Office*, 204.

⁹ Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 87. Ellin’s mother probably had genuine concerns, but she and her sons benefited as a result. Ellin kept house for her mother and each of her brothers, and she also helped William in his the course of his business.

to have been doled out sparingly, on account of the fact that women were understood to have a greater propensity for sexual activity than their male counterparts: in the 1630s two of the Ferrar women at Little Gidding wanted to make vows of chastity, but Bishop Williams dissuaded them. “Let the younger Women marry was the best Advice, that they might not be led into temptation”.¹⁰

I. The role of insufficient resources

Despite the presence of a small number of circumstances in which the retention of a celibate state could secure general acceptance, it is clear from a consultation of the printed literature that the ideas underpinning the need for entry into marriage underwent little change over the early modern period, and support for marriage remained the dominant discursive theme. Yet there were a number of tensions within the discourse itself, the most significant of which was formulated in terms of economics. In the context of Tudor and Stuart England, financial sufficiency exercised considerable authority over entry into marriage. Premature marriage was singled out by contemporaries as a major source of social ills, and much of the printed advice cautioned against a marriage that was economically unsound. From the conduct manuals of Henry Bullinger, who in 1541 argued that it was “not mete for every man to mary” for “many poore maryages make many beggars” to the work of Thomas Hilder almost a century later, moralists continued to proselytise on the virtues of self-sufficiency: “a discreet Christian will not marry untill he can comfortably conclude that his present, or future meanes will be sufficient to keep him from poverty, pinching poverty, and destruction, and from lying as a burthen on others”.¹¹ Plays and stories also presented their listeners with offerings on a similar theme. The popular fictional character Jack Newberrie, for example, declared himself unwilling to enter the bonds of matrimony in his present financial situation since “many sorrows follow marriage, especially where want remains”.¹² Further prompts, if such were needed, appeared in the form of ancient adages and proverbial wisdoms; “First thrive and then wive”, and “he who marries for love and no money, hath good nights but

¹⁰ Cited in Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 168.

¹¹ Bullinger, *Christen state*, fol. xxix; Hilder, *Conjugal Counsell*, 11.

¹² Cited in Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 169.

sorry days”, offered a constant reminder to prospective marital candidates of the need for economic security.¹³

The role played by economics in the marital decision-making process is also a major feature of modern historical analysis, and there is a vast literature on the relationship between financial circumstance and marriage decisions in the historiography of Western Europe.¹⁴ In particular, the Malthusian model of demographic change, transmitted via the mechanism of Hajnal’s theory of household creation, has been extremely influential in encouraging the delineation of a theory of early modern marriage behaviour based exclusively around the concept of failure. The model itself has been articulated in terms of two major variants: first, the niche-based variant; and second, the resource-based variant. In the former, the ability to marry is thought to have depended largely on the capacity of the couple to insert themselves into the economic and social interstices of a given community. Thus Peter Laslett has suggested that,

The decision to set up a family for the first time could only be made when there was an opening, an opening in the social fabric so to speak. ... It might be a cottage with its patch of ground and rights annexed to it on the common land, which became available to a manservant and a womanservant, and enabled them to set up as “cottagers or labouring people”. It might be a bakery, or a joinery, a tailor’s, butcher’s, wheelwright’s, blacksmith’s or weaver’s shop, each with its “practice” attached ... Only for the truly fortunate would it be an assemblage of fields to own, or fields to rent, and this, often but not always, meant inheritance. ... Hence all young people had to wait to marry, and some could not marry at all.¹⁵

However, while the ability to find an economic niche has continuing relevance in any analysis of early modern marriage patterns, current fashion tends to downplay the significance of the niche-based variant in Tudor and Stuart England because it implies a system of population replacement that linked nuptiality to mortality. Unlike other

¹³ J. Clarke, *Par oemiologia anglo-Latina in usum scholarum concinnata. Or Proverbs English and Latin* (1638), 230; cited in Cressy, *Birth*, 261.

¹⁴ See Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 125.

¹⁵ P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost further explored*, third edition (1983), 100-1. (All subsequent entries under the short title of *World* refer to this edition, unless otherwise stated).

European countries in the early modern period, there is no evidence in England of an inverse relationship between expectation of life and nuptiality - such as was found in France in the eighteenth century, for example - and in addition it is clear that long before 1700 England had acquired a substantial pool of workers with no foothold in the land.¹⁶ The English experience is then thought to be more accurately represented in terms of the resource-based variant in which marriage depended less on the opportunity to successfully penetrate the economy and more on the accumulation potential of the individuals in question. Thus in the neo-Malthusian model of demographic change offered by Wrigley and Schofield, which envisages a population kept in “dilatatory homeostasis” by negative feedback relationships between living standards, age at first marriage and the proportion of people ever marrying, it was a decline in the real wage that impacted most upon the marriage rate: the discovery of a secular link between real wage movements and percentages ever married presupposes firstly that some minimum amount of resources should be accumulated prior to marriage, and secondly that such accumulation should arise mainly as a result of labour earnings. The ability to establish a niche in the seventeenth century economy then appears to have been of secondary importance to marriage decisions for the bulk of the population in the long-term.¹⁷ Moreover, real wage movements may have been capable of eliciting yet further restraints. Since frequent references of gifts to girls or young couples at the time of their marriage suggest that the marriage itself elicited many of the goods and even the capital required for the establishment and management of a new home, the inability to successfully accumulate may of itself have proved an insufficient deterrent to marriage. Marital decisions were likely to be taken not simply on the basis of current accumulation but in addition on the confidence that future earnings would support an expanding new household.¹⁸

Economic issues feature prominently in the marriage decisions of single people in the literature of the early modern period. The first concern of both parties in cases of matrimony was one of economic viability - before contracting themselves into marriage, individuals made careful enquiries about the “ability” of their future spouses if they were male and the level of “provision” if they were female.¹⁹ By the

¹⁶ R. Schofield, “Family structure, demographic behaviour, and economic growth”, in Walter and Schofield, eds., *Famine*, 299.

¹⁷ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, esp. ch. 11.

¹⁸ Schofield, “English Marriage Patterns Revisited”, 17.

¹⁹ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 167.

seventeenth century customary inheritance procedures had provided a frame of reference that outlined the type of goods the future partners were ideally expected to bring to the new domestic unit, each having an equal significance in the creation of the new home. Production goods were usually considered the responsibility of the man, a measure of provision that included a place to live and means of support, and household goods and cash, commonly in the shape of the marriage portion, that of the woman. This was not perceived as problematic, but rather as a practical application of an inheritance culture driven by an expectation of marriage. Hugh George told the friends of Mary Vaughan, for example, who were pressing him to marry her, that “a man must first be provided of a house and thinges necessarie before he should marrye”.²⁰ Similarly, John King of Dunstow had declared to the Archdeacon’s Court in Oxford in the 1580s that he intended to marry Ursula Saule “at Michaelmas next, when he hath provided a living for her”.²¹ Women like Joan Sayers, who had only consented to marry Christopher Smith on condition that “his father would performe his promise which was to give him the farm at Aldstocke” and to make her “a joynter thereof”, expected to be provided with a home and financial security.²²

Men in their turn, needed to satisfy themselves that their future spouse could make good the investment of a comparable cash sum, conditional, of course, upon individual economic and social status. Thus in 1592 Tide Clear of the London parish of St James Garlickhithe had agreed to a wedding between himself and Elizabeth Spakeman only “if she have so much money as she saith she hath I will marry hir ... she saith she hath £20 and if she will by and by or within these five dayes give me £10 let her bring her clothes and com to me when she will and I will marry hir”.²³ Similarly during an ecclesiastical court case in the county of Essex seven years later the witness concerned described how a man had visited the friends of his wife-to-be prior to the wedding in order to stake his claim to the “woman’s portion”; the money had presumably been entrusted to them in advance of the ceremony.²⁴ In practice the means by which goods were brought to the marriage could vary according to the abilities of the individual partners. Joan Leetes’ mother initially agreed to allow her to take her father’s lands as marriage goods when she was contracted to William

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Wrightson, *English Society*, 70.

²² Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 168.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 269.

Meriton, and Joan Mortimer's husband-to-be Richard Campion had outlined the full extent of his monetary value in order to entice Joan to accept his marriage proposal - he claimed to "be worth 20 poundes in money and 20 nobles [£6 3s 4d] in howshold stuffe".²⁵ Nevertheless, the significance of the economic agreement for the immediate success of the marriage, in addition to its long-term viability, remains clear. Failure to produce the promised goods frequently resulted in broken contracts that could only be resolved by recourse to litigation.

Under stringent financial circumstances, decisions to postpone marriage arrangements then appear to constitute the most rational course of action. Calculations by Donald Woodward based on indices of the cost of living in northern England in the early modern period suggest that the price of feeding an adult male rose from around 1d. a day or less in the mid-sixteenth century to almost 3d. in the 1630s.²⁶ For the majority of single men this rise was at least manageable. In Hull, for example, unmarried craftsmen could invariably earn enough to support their basic diet in less than a hundred days, and for those in Lincoln the picture remained broadly similar.²⁷ Single labourers did less well, but the position was most critical for men with dependants: since common law allocated the control of all marital property to the husband, it demanded in turn that the obligation of the husband was to maintain his wife, regardless of the wealth she brought to the marriage.²⁸ Consequently, labourers with a wife and four children in Hull in the 1630s would have needed to work for an impossible 520 days per year to earn enough to cover the basic family diet, and even skilled craftsmen during the 1610s in excess of 300.²⁹ Conditions began to ease from the mid-seventeenth century, but during the fifty years before the Civil War, it is conceivable that many labourers and a considerable number of craftsmen, after giving due consideration to the financial implications of marriage, would have chosen to postpone it until there were signs of improvement in the economy.³⁰ As Lis and Soly

²⁵ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 167-8.

²⁶ D. Woodward, *Men at work: Labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), 216.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁸ M. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society* (1995), 101-3. Ballads of the 1620s told of the economic difficulties a man would face as a result of marriage. See A. Fletcher, "Manhood, the Male Body, Courtship and the Household in Early Modern England", *History*, 8 (1999), 425.

²⁹ Woodward, *Men*, 217.

³⁰ Only two per cent of men and a similar proportion of women who consulted Richard Napier suffering from stress reported that their illnesses had been brought on by economic obstacles to marriage. See MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, Table C.I, 240. However, his clientele did not include

have so acutely revealed: “Bachelors were least threatened with hunger, but families generally existed in a state of chronic need. Marriage for most workers brought misery, and the unskilled in particular had to tighten their belts at marriage.”³¹

Given the worsening economic climate and the legal obligation of men to support their wives, it would not be unusual to find, as Peter Laslett has suggested, that the inability of the bride to provide a suitable portion constituted the most likely reason for the failure of a couple to reach a marriage agreement during this period.³² Indeed, during a court case in Somerset it was revealed that John Sheppard had fled the country rather than marry Mary Robins, “because she was not able to bring with her any portion or sufficient value to help pay for the purchase of their living”.³³ By the seventeenth century, the English marriage portion - the amount of capital (or productive goods) a bride brought to a marriage - appears to have been important to the idea and conclusion of marriage agreements at every social level. Moreover, since economic prudence was especially valued as a female virtue, the lack of a portion provided evidence of material failings, in addition to implying the existence of moral ones. Richard Gough, Shropshire yeoman and orthodox Anglican, in discussing the marriage of a man to his servant maid, was openly caustic about the character of the latter - “a wanton, gadding dame, who had neither goods nor good name”.³⁴

Furthermore, there is clear evidence of a common understanding that the failure to marry to a large extent was rooted in economic failure, especially in relation to the provision of a portion. Testators in the late fifteenth century, for example, had been aware of the problems poor girls encountered in accumulating sufficient resources to enable them to marry, and had been prepared to lend assistance where possible. Thus William Covert had willed that every poor maiden lacking the funds to marry within five miles of his home was to have 6s. 8d. towards her marriage, and others like Robert Benjamin and John Buckland had bequeathed goods in the form of pots, pans, vessels or bedding to aid poorer girls in the setting up of a home.³⁵ In the

the poorest members of society: his fees were typically 1s. but ranged considerably between 6d. and 4s., although the gentry were charged considerably more. *Ibid.*, 51 and fn. 118.

³¹ C. Lis and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Brighton, 1982), 19. For a less pessimistic view see J.U. Nef, “Prices and Industrial Capitalism in France and England, 1540-1640”, in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed., *Essays in Economic History, Volume I* (1954), 108-34.

³² Laslett, *World*, 99-100.

³³ G.R. Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1979), 97.

³⁴ Gough, *Myddle*, 113.

³⁵ M.E. Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows after the Black Death* (Woodbridge, 1998), 28.

Tudor and Stuart periods, similar examples of charitable bequests reflected both the importance of a portion and the relative value of its size in improving marital opportunity: Jane Pearson of Wrinehall in Cheshire left £20 to the three daughters of Robert Gormell in 1671 “to be set forth for the use and benefitt of the abovesaid three daughters for their *better* preferment in marriage”.³⁶ Employers, too, were often active in improving the marriage prospects of their employees. Samuel Pepys gave his servants Jane Birch and her prospective husband Tom Edwards £40 by way of a portion on the occasion of their marriage, and Joyce Jeffreys was particularly generous in the marriage gifts she extended to her hired staff: one maid was given a present of £100, and another received the sum of £20. She even gave 10s. to the maid of one of her tenants.³⁷ Institutions also recognised they had a role to play in enhancing the marital opportunities of those unfortunate enough to find themselves among the poorer sectors of society. To that end the Laud Charity, a trust based on land given to Reading by the Archbishop of the same name, tailored the nature of its giving towards improving the chances of impoverished young women by offering poor servant girls the sum of £20 in the form of a marriage portion.³⁸ And by the final decades of the seventeenth century, in the climate of moral panic over the perceived decline in marriage rates, continued faith in the efficacy of a young girl’s portion to facilitate her entry into marriage encouraged at least one social commentator to recommend nothing less than state provision. The anonymous author of the pamphlet entitled *Marriage promoted* (1690) suggested that those who chose to remain single be appropriately taxed and the resulting money made available “for Portions to young Maids who are under Forty Years of Age” in order to facilitate their marriage.³⁹

The foundation and existence of charitable trusts testifies amply to the problems of penurious young women with little or nothing in the way of inherited assets who would have expected to accumulate their portion through time spent in remunerative work. Most young women of middling status and above probably received the bulk of their portion from their close family, but those lower down the social scale relied on a combination of sources: inheritance from parents; gifts and legacies from employers, friends and relatives; charitable bequests; and, most

³⁶ C.R.O. WS 1671, Jane Pearson (my italics).

³⁷ Latham and Matthews, eds., *Samuel Pepys X*, 195; R.G. Griffiths, “Joyce Jeffreys of Ham Castle”, *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 10 (1933): 22.

³⁸ M. Fellgett, “Revealed Women - Widows and Spinsters in Seventeenth Century Reading”, University of Reading M. Phil., 1990, 104.

importantly, money saved from wages. It is their situation that appears most critical. Though girls generally began to work outside their natal households in their mid-teens, and continued in paid employment, where possible, until such time as they married, the need to add to a small portion or indeed raise one at all was increasingly at odds with existing remunerative opportunities. In an overstocked labour market in which they were already at a disadvantage, their chances of obtaining waged work in service, in a trade and even in the more general field of labouring appear to have become increasingly circumscribed.

Turning first to the institution of service, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the institution itself was undergoing considerable pressure, especially during the 1650s. Service in husbandry - a form of training and employment designed specifically to cater for the needs of the agricultural sector - was a major form of hired labour in the early modern period and a common lifecycle occupation for young single people. Servants may have constituted around sixty per cent of the population aged between fifteen and twenty-four at any one time, most of whom were hired on annual contracts, and most of whom moved on at the end of each yearly agreement to negotiate a new position with another employer.⁴⁰ For the majority, service appears to have constituted a normal stage in the life-cycle process between the end of childhood and the beginning of social adulthood (as signalled by marriage). It would therefore not be surprising to find that those who were planning to marry would wait until their current period in service had terminated before proceeding to solemnization, thus allowing the weeks immediately following the end of the agricultural year to emerge as a peak period for entry into marriage.⁴¹ Indeed it is this situation that allowed Ann Kussmaul to suggest a decline in the number of young people entering service in the mid-seventeenth century, based on her estimate of the number of servants in arable areas marrying at the end of their annual contracts.⁴² For Kussmaul observed that in the rural south and east of England, where arable farming predominated, servants' annual contracts were commonly initiated and terminated at Michaelmas (29th September), making October the month in which a large number of marriages were celebrated. The fall in the frequency of marriages during the month

³⁹ Anon., *Marriage promoted*, 56.

⁴⁰ A. Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), 4; J.A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England A Social History 1550-1760* (London, 1987), 3.

⁴¹ Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 67.

⁴² Kussmaul, *Servants*, 97-9.

of October in mid-seventeenth century England then appeared consonant with a reduction in the number of young people entering service. Furthermore, the decline itself could be more than adequately explained by reference to a rise in the cost of living and a fall in the price of labour, factors which were occasioned by the particular demographic and economic pressures of the early seventeenth century, and which would, in Kussmaul's opinion, have invited any rational seventeenth-century employer to reconsider the cost-effectiveness of hired servants. As the calculations of Robert Loder, the most frequently quoted of contemporary farmers, revealed, there were considerable financial drawbacks involved in maintaining a workforce consisting primarily of live-in servants as opposed to day labourers.⁴³

Nevertheless, there are at least two major problems with Kussmaul's analysis. In the first instance, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that a rise in the cost of living elicited a change in employment practices amongst seventeenth century employers. Loder may have complained about the cost of his contracted labour force - "It were good for me to keep all my servants at bord wages, or els to keep none at all yf I could handsomely bring it to passe" - but he made no significant attempts to change the nature of his terms of employment. Though he experimented by placing his carter on board wages, the trial was unsatisfactory, and Loder decided to retain his hired servants on annual contract.⁴⁴ In addition, a decline in the incidence of October marriages may offer little information of value regarding swings in the incidence of service. While a fall in the number of marriages solemnized during the month of October could have arisen in response to a decline in opportunities in service, it may, alternatively, be more correctly characterised as a function of the general fall in the rate of marriage now identified in the mid-seventeenth century: the period identified by Kussmaul as one of contraction in agricultural service coincides strikingly with the period of plummeting marriage rates identified by the investigations of Wrigley and Schofield.⁴⁵ That there were pressures on the institution of service, however, is likely to be correct, even though such pressures may be more correctly characterised in terms of over supply rather than falling demand. The legal prohibition on marriage clearly forced male and female

⁴³ Ibid., 100-5. For Loder's comment see R. Fussell, ed., *Robert Loder's Farm Accounts 1610-1620*, Camden third series, 53 (1936): 68, 72. The cost of feeding servants worked out at around £10 per year, more than most day labourers were capable of earning in a year. Ibid., xxviii and D. Woodward, "Early modern servants in husbandry revisited", *Agricultural History Review*, 48 (2000): 146, fn. 20.

⁴⁴ Fussell, ed., *Robert Loder*, 68.

servants to make decisions on the length of their service based on the availability of day rather than contract work. With little prospect of marriage on the horizon, a greater proportion of servants may have preferred to retain the security of a yearly contract, especially if they were female.⁴⁶

Other factors, in highlighting the difficulties women in particular may have encountered in gaining any type of position in service, may in part explain their apparent reluctance to relinquish such work. Jim Sharpe's analysis of six pre-industrial English settlements has indicated that young women may have experienced delayed entry into service relative to young men. While among males it appears to have been the case that up to thirty-five per cent of the fifteen to nineteen year age group, and thirty per cent of those aged between twenty and twenty-four were employed in service, the proportions of female servants in employment were skewed in the opposite direction, with only twenty-seven per cent of the younger group and forty per cent of the older age group having positions in service.⁴⁷ Moreover, in the set of parish listings studied by Ann Kussmaul for the period between 1574 and 1821 the overall ratio of male to female servants was 107:100, with the ratio in farmers and craftsmen's households being 121:100 and 171:100 respectively.⁴⁸ Further evidence of an anecdotal nature points towards the existence of disenchanting service prospects during the second quarter of the seventeenth century, at least in the county of Norfolk. Records of passengers leaving Great Yarmouth for Holland and New England between 1637 and 1639 indicate that a considerable number of young single women were ready and willing to try their luck overseas. Though the bulk of those travelling to New England were already contracted to their master's family in domestic positions, many of those whose destination was listed as Holland - women like Anne Thompsone, a thirty-two year old spinster from Norwich - were clearly intent on

⁴⁵ Woodward, "Early modern servants", 147.

⁴⁶ Anecdotal examples of references to ageing servants, especially females, are not uncommon in the testamentary evidence of the seventeenth century. The efforts of at least one servant in this regard were significant enough for her to be recorded for posterity in stone: on a flagstone in the parish church of Nynehead in Somerset the inscription reads as follows: "Here lyeth the body of Eleanor Pike, spinster, who departed this life April 8th 1722, aged 72, having lived a true and faithful servant above fifty years with Edw. and Jepp Clarke of Chipley Esq.". See P. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations* (Cambridge, 1977), 75.

⁴⁷ Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 210. If Ann Kussmaul was correct in her assumption that male and female servants would each need to save for ten years in order to stock a small farm, the delayed entry of women into service may have rendered the possibility of saving enough all the more unlikely. Kussmaul, *Servants*, 81.

⁴⁸ Kussmaul, *Servants*, 4.

gaining employment on arrival, and gave a specific reason for their journey: “there to dwell as a Sarvant”.⁴⁹

The problems of demographic expansion and economic depression apparent in the service sector were also visible in other areas of the economy. I.K. Ben-Amos has been able to demonstrate that opportunities in Bristol for women in urban trades diminished as formal apprenticeship for young females, which had existed on a limited scale in the early sixteenth century, gradually became eliminated. Pressures created by the growing number of young men of the landed and more substantial agricultural classes, who desired apprenticeship positions in urban crafts and trades, made entry into such occupations for single women progressively more difficult and competitive. As a result they were pushed away from opportunities in trades and crafts towards domestic service or the textile sector, where they received limited training in knitting, sewing, button and lace-making, all of which were of low remunerative status.⁵⁰ In addition, in the course of her investigations on the Bristol apprenticeship registers, Ben-Amos has been able to detect the presence of a shift away from the sixteenth century desire to formally apprentice daughters of gentlemen and yeoman, as such apprenticeships became a less respectable course of action for women of gentle and middling status. During the seventeenth century the system of apprenticeship for women then became more closely associated with the training and employment of orphans and parish paupers.⁵¹

Though the exact nature of girls’ apprenticeship to trades and how it changed or declined over the early modern period requires more investigation, constraints on employment opportunities in almost all sectors of the Tudor and Stuart economy left women with relatively few sources of income. Guilds, for example, were frequently pro-active in their attempts to control all unregulated female employment. At Salisbury in 1613 the Barber Surgeons agitated against unskilled women in the trade, and in Bristol, the incorporation of the tobacco-pipe makers as a guild in 1652 prompted them to prohibit the employment of “women or maids or any woman

⁴⁹ C.B. Jewson, *Transcript of Three Registers of Passengers from Great Yarmouth to Holland and New England, 1637-1639*, Norfolk Record Society, 25 (1954): 25.

⁵⁰ Ben-Amos, “Women”, 236.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 247. By an Act of Henry VIII vagrant children between five and fourteen were to be bound apprentice. Edward VI developed this policy, adding that sons of vagrants could be apprenticed until twenty-four, daughters until twenty, the punishment for rebellion being slavery. Under the later Poor Law Statute of 1601, justices of the peace were given the power to apprentice, in addition to paupers and vagrants, the children of parents whose were unable to support them - who were “over burthened with children”. See O.J. Dunlop, *English Apprenticeship & Child Labour. A History* (1912), 70.

stranger”.⁵² Moreover, in the stringent economic climate of the Tudor and Stuart periods, even casual opportunities for female labourers were considerably lower than those available to men. Though women occasionally appeared in large gangs when demand for labour was high or when they proved especially cost effective to employ, a survey of the institutional records of a number of northern towns has revealed that the majority of labourers employed by such institutions were adult males.⁵³ Furthermore the reduced access to casual opportunities under which single females laboured was compounded by the practice of paying them a substantially lower level of remuneration. Deeply embedded male attitudes regarding the economic and social inferiority of women, which received scriptural authority and support, ensured that for the most part women’s earnings were no higher than the equivalent of two thirds the levels of their male counterparts, and daily pay could be as low as one third.⁵⁴ In addition, the institutional records of the sixteenth century outline the existence of widening wage differentials in some areas over the course of the early modern period. While male wage rates for building labourers at Durham may have doubled between the early and late sixteenth century from 3d. or 4d. to 6d. per day, female workers wages over the same period remained static at the lower figure of 2d. per day.⁵⁵ Moreover, men could, in the last resort, take refuge in the army or the navy. For women, further opportunities for remunerative activity appear to have been considerably less salubrious: the last resort frequently meant that of prostitution.⁵⁶

II. The role of social control

It remains possible, however, that the inability of a young woman to amass sufficient resources may have wielded less direct pressure than a process of rationalisation would suggest, for the extent to which lack of access to a portion and failure to marry enjoyed a symbiotic relationship in seventeenth century England remains a matter of ongoing debate. Richard Smith has suggested that the marginalisation of women in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, rather than delaying marriage, instead encouraged a situation in which they more readily sought out marriage, possibly at an earlier age, and almost certainly in higher

⁵² Ibid., 144; Ben-Amos, “Women”, 241.

⁵³ Woodward, *Men*, 115.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 112-4. Lev. 27.3-4 suggests women be paid three-fifths of the adult male rate.

⁵⁵ Woodward, *Men*, 112.

proportions than had previously been the case.⁵⁷ David Wier, too, has questioned the validity of a model that requires people to postpone a marriage in order to increase the size of their nest egg, when the amount that could be saved was so small as to render the prospect of marriage in the foreseeable future extremely unlikely.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear that economic pressures remained a vital part of the overall picture. Unlike a number of other countries in central Europe, England had no direct system of marriage prevention in the early modern period.⁵⁹ Concern with untimely marriages had caused both the Henrician and the late Elizabethan parliament to flirt with the idea of tighter regulation of marriage, but in the event national legislation proved unnecessary.⁶⁰ After the terrible harvest crises of the 1590s the Overseers of the Poor in a number of counties took it upon themselves to prevent economically unsound marriages, particularly those of migrants, and wage earners born outside the parishes they proposed to enter were also refused settlement if they had dependent families or intended to marry.⁶¹ Clergymen too colluded in such actions by refusing to marry immigrants whom parishioners were anxious to exclude. Such restrictions, in the view of Ralph Houlbrooke, played a not inconsiderable part in reducing the incidence of marriage during this period.

Houlbrooke is not alone in voicing these concerns. Historians allied to the ideology of social control have viewed the implementation of the Elizabethan Poor Law at the end of the sixteenth century as a key factor in the shift towards a later age of marriage and a higher incidence of lifetime celibacy, both of which are visible in the demographic data of the seventeenth century.⁶² Though the impetus to the implementation of control can usually be located within the severe depression of the

⁵⁶ Some women dressed as men in order to join the army or navy. See R.M. Dekker and L.C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (1989), esp. ch. 3.

⁵⁷ R.M. Smith "Geographical Diversity in the Resort to Marriage in Late Medieval Europe: Work, Reputation and Unmarried females in the Household Formation Systems of Northern and Southern Europe", in P.J.P. Goldberg, ed., *Woman is a Worthy Wight* (Stroud, 1992), 45.

⁵⁸ Wier, "Rather Never", 341.

⁵⁹ In Central European parishes clergymen were forbidden by law to marry indigent persons without a marriage permit issued by the local judiciary. See M. Mitterauer and R. Sieder, *The European Family: patriarchy to partnership from the Middle Ages to the present* (Oxford, 1982), 123.

⁶⁰ A policy paper sent to Cromwell suggested preventing the marriages of young men until they were "of potent age", and in the parliamentary session of 1597-8 an unsuccessful bill aimed at preventing "sundry great abuses by licences for marriages without banes" was proposed. See S. Hindle, "The Problem of Pauper Marriage in Seventeenth-Century England", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 8 (1998): 79, fn. 33.

⁶¹ Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 68.

⁶² R.M. Smith, "Charity, self-interest and welfare: reflections from demographic and family history", in M. Daunton, ed., *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1996), 24.

1590s, examples of parish officers refusing to allow couples to marry continue to manifest themselves in the records of a number of English communities in the first half of the seventeenth century, and even as late as the Restoration period, cases in which local officials denied partners the opportunity to marry, according to Steve Hindle, can be interpreted as a process of exclusion in which community representatives ostracized those they considered guilty “of imprudent and potentially burdensome marital behaviour”.⁶³ The fact that much of the operation of such control was likely to have been unofficial in nature tends to conceal the very extent of its effect. Nevertheless, it was a recognized, and to some extent acceptable, weapon in the battle to reduce the poor rate: Sir Dudley North believed local officers regularly attempted to defend their parish from charges, taking “great care to prevent the marriage of those that they have, hindering all they can possibly the matching of young ones together”.⁶⁴ Some of the objections were formulated around parish relief. Edward Marten and Jane Goodwin of Frampton in Lincolnshire, for example, were refused permission to marry until they could offer proof that they would not be a drain on parochial resources.⁶⁵ Others were focused more strongly around the provision of accommodation: in 1596 all vestrymen of the town of Swallowfield in Wiltshire were ordered to have “an especyall care to speake to the mynyster to stay the maryage of such as wolde mary before they have a convenient house to lyve in according to their callinge”; in 1628 the minister of Nether Compton in Dorset complained that Anne Russed “hath no house nor home of her own and very likely to bring charge on the parish, and therefore will hardly be suffered to marry in our parish”.⁶⁶ But regardless of the nature of the objection that was submitted, control of marital opportunity constituted one official, if illegal, strategy by which parishes sought to discourage economically unsuitable marriages.⁶⁷

Other strategies prove more difficult to document. In spite of the absence of legislation directed specifically towards the prevention of unsuitable marriages, a number of statutes operated indirectly to reduce their incidence. In 1556, the age for the earliest termination of London apprenticeships had been fixed at twenty-four in a

⁶³ Hindle, “Pauper Marriage”, 83.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-1; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 131.

⁶⁷ William Gouge indicated that denying marriage on the grounds of poverty contravened Christian law: “For Mariage is honourable in all ... whereupon it is accounted a Doctrine of devils to forbid to marrie”. Gouge, *Domesticall*, 183.

deliberate attempt to check “over hastie maryages and over sone setting up of householdes of and by the youthe”, and in 1563 this was prescribed by statute for all cities and corporate towns. In 1589 an act was passed which prevented the building of cottages without the benefit of four acres of land, and strictly regulated the subletting of rooms in order to discourage such activity.⁶⁸ Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that charity payments were geared towards excluding the claims of those who had recently married. Robert Dallington of Geddington, whose will in 1636 endowed a charity with £300 “for the distribution of twenty-four three-penny loaves everie Sunday to twenty-four of the poor of the parish”, ensured that the criterion of residence necessary for eligibility automatically excluded servants, apprentices and young married couples.⁶⁹ These provisions may have been echoed in other rural charities.

The prosecution of those who erected cottages with less than the required amount of land and the eviction of lodgers likely to prove financially burdensome, in addition to the withholding of charity payments from young married couples, clearly had the capacity to affect marriage decisions, although the overall effectiveness of this plethora of preventative practices is hard to gauge. Couples intent on matrimony could usually manage to circumvent parish decisions, if sufficiently determined, for while local officials may have refused settlement, rogue priests were often happy to marry anyone for an appropriate fee. In Somerset in the 1620s the parishes of Milverton and Pitney and the peculiar jurisdiction of Ilminster appeared as early English equivalents of Gretna Green, and other couples prevented from marrying in Somerset made their way to the neighbouring counties of Devon, Gloucester and Dorset in search of more sympathetic wedding locations.⁷⁰ The poor lodger did become a particular problem for towns, but regulations were concerned less with the prevention of marriages and more with the attempt to circumvent the cost of maintaining pregnant single women who were likely to become a drain on the parish. However, declining opportunities for permanent settlement clearly had the ability to delay marriage decisions, if not render them impossible in the longer term. Research on migration patterns in the Tudor and early Stuart periods has led Anthony Salerno

⁶⁸ Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 67-8.

⁶⁹ S. Hindle, “Fuel, Dole and Bread: Order and Expediency in a Forest Economy, c.1600-1800”, paper for Sussex ‘Cultural and Community Studies’ seminar (Brighton, 6th November 1997), 16-17, by kind permission of the author.

⁷⁰ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 96.

to suggest that lack of settlement opportunities in Wiltshire resulted in the existence of a higher age at first marriage in this area between 1581 and 1660 than in other areas of the country.⁷¹

III. The role of sex imbalances

Despite the problems of accumulation and the putative role of the community as matrimonial custodian, it could be argued that the chances of marriage were as likely to be reliant upon the availability of potential partners as upon the extent of financial success or communal control. The marriage discourse was particularly insistent on the need for compatibility in the choice of partner, and the increasingly romanticized view of companionate marriage - a further source of tension within the discourse - may have militated against the development of mutually satisfying relationships, especially where the pool of potential marriage partners was unbalanced or restricted. In this respect, research into the failure of individuals to marry must then focus largely around the concept of deteriorating sex ratios, either temporarily as a result of migration induced by structural change or more permanently because of disease, emigration and conflict.

There is considerable evidence to indicate the existence of a highly mobile population in England during the Tudor and Stuart periods. J. Cornwall's study of 206 witnesses before the church courts in seventeenth-century Sussex, for example, revealed that up to seventy-five per cent of those giving evidence no longer lived in the place of their birth, and in Nottinghamshire eighty-four per cent of all the surnames of non-freeholder tax payers in one division of the county had disappeared between 1544 and 1641.⁷² The stable core of families may have varied considerably between communities - "churning", or the extent to which replacement residents moved on themselves and were replaced, is very difficult to measure - but the turnover rate usually fluctuated between four and six per cent per annum, of which as much as a fifth may have been attributable to mortality.⁷³ The nature of the migration

⁷¹ A. Salerno, "The Social Background of Seventeenth-Century Emigration to America", *Journal of British Studies*, 19 (1979): 49.

⁷² J. Cornwall, "Evidence of population mobility in the seventeenth century", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 40 (1967): 146; M. Kitch, "Population movement and migration in pre-industrial rural England", in B. Short, ed., *The English Rural Community Image and analysis* (Cambridge, 1992), 63.

⁷³ L. Boothman, "Mobility and Stability in Long Melford, Suffolk in the Late Seventeenth Century", *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999): 41; Kitch, "Population movement" 73, 63.

process was in part a function of the types of training available to young people in the seventeenth century, and migration often began when a child left the family home to take up an arranged position or in search of work. Servants and apprentices, in particular, were a highly mobile sector of society, but in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, under pressure from endemic underemployment and periodic economic depression, a rising number of young singles may have been driven to adopt a migratory lifestyle as they travelled to find employment: Peter Clark's survey of migrants in three Kentish towns between 1580 and 1640 revealed that around eighty per cent of those arriving in Canterbury during the sixty years in question were under the age of thirty when they made their appearance.⁷⁴

Three broad categories of migrants predominate in any discussion of early modern migratory movements, each of which was determined by the exigencies of the labour market: the first category was dominated by the system of apprenticeship; the second category by the institution of agricultural service; and the third by the need for subsistence. In urban areas, it was the system of apprenticeship that drove a major part of the migration process, with almost twenty-four per cent of migrants entering Canterbury between 1580 and 1640, for example, registering their ages as between those of eleven and twenty (i.e., the age at which most youths began their period of indenture).⁷⁵ This type of "betterment" migration, which generally involved movement between countryside and town, was characterised by its high levels of organisation and driven by the desire to improve social or economic position.⁷⁶ Movement to small towns can often be typified as relatively localised but would-be apprentices to the larger towns and cities in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries may have travelled over considerable distances to take up their positions. Thus nearly seventy-five per cent of all apprentices in Bristol in the early seventeenth century had migrated from outside the local area, and in London during the same period about eighty-five per cent of all apprentices were not of local origin: of 104 inhabitants in the parishes of Whitechurch and Stepney between 1580 and 1639, for

⁷⁴ P. Clark, "The migrant in Kentish towns 1580-1640", in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (1972), 124.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 134.

example, as few as fourteen had been born in one of the London suburbs or other parts of Middlesex.⁷⁷

The internal dynamics of migration in the countryside may have been very different, but young rural servants in particular were highly mobile. Comparison of two surviving censuses for the community of Cogenhoe in Northamptonshire for the years 1618 and 1628 has revealed that of the twenty-six servants in Cogenhoe appearing on the listing of 1628 only Elizabeth Stocking had been among the twenty-eight listed in the earlier census; even she had left the village in 1621 and moved between households during the period from 1624 to 1628.⁷⁸ A similar picture is visible in the Nottinghamshire community of Clayworth. Of the sixty-seven servants listed in 1688, only one had been in the community when the earlier listing was completed in 1676, and at that point had been employed in a different household.⁷⁹ Rural servants could stay in one place for some time - the average length of stay in Cogenhoe was about three years - but they more generally moved on between annual contracts, tending to circulate within a radius of about ten miles around their home region.⁸⁰

Finally, in addition to the organised movement of apprentices and the circular migration of agricultural servants, another group of migrants is highly visible in the documentary sources of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries - the "subsistence" migrants. During the later Tudor period severe underemployment, tremendous variation in annual mortality, and the small size of communities all interacted to induce individuals with few responsibilities who lacked stable positions to travel in search of work.⁸¹ Such travel was frequently long distance, and tramping was most common between June and October when poorer migrants moved erratically across the countryside in search of seasonal employment, lodging in barns and tippling houses whenever possible, driven by crude subsistence factors that were not accurately matched to economic need.⁸² Movement was not restricted to any specific age groups and could involve couples and even whole families, but many of

⁷⁷ I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (1994), 86; D. Cressy, "Occupations, Migration and Literacy in East London, 1580-1640", *Local Population Studies*, 5 (1970): 57.

⁷⁸ Laslett, *Family Life*, 72.

⁷⁹ P. Spufford, "Population Movement in Seventeenth Century England", *Local Population Studies*, 4 (1970): 47.

⁸⁰ Laslett, *Family Life*, 73; Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 69.

⁸¹ D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (1977), 35.

⁸² Clark, "Migrant", 137-145.

those who tramped across the country in search of work were young and single, and in addition were predominantly male.⁸³

Since migration, in the view of Peter Clark, appears as “an almost universal phenomenon affecting the great mass of the national population”, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, local and regional employment opportunities clearly had the power to affect migratory practices.⁸⁴ In turn, the differential nature of the opportunities offered could lead to imbalances in the sex ratio with all the attendant implications in terms of higher levels of celibacy. While Ann Kussmaul’s work on seasonal marriage patterns caused her to suggest that the net effect of sex-selective migration on nuptiality was likely to have been weak, the strength of the effect of mobility on the marriage opportunities of London servants is a demonstrable feature of the work of Vivien Brodsky Elliot.⁸⁵ Her analysis of marriage licences prevented her from commenting on the extent to which migration may have served to raise levels of celibacy, but she was able to offer a model of marriage and mobility that established migration as a powerful force, capable of delaying entry into marriage independently of social status: licences confirm the fact that London-born girls married on average at the age of 20.5 years, while migrant single women did not marry until they were considerably older, at 24.2 years, regardless of whether or not they were residing with kin.⁸⁶

Other studies highlight in greater detail the capacity of sex-specific migratory movements to affect marital opportunities. The excess of female migrants over their male counterparts in Odiham in Hampshire during the early seventeenth century, for example, appears to have encouraged a greater proportion of women to draw their future husbands from neighbouring parishes, initiating a nine-fold increase in the percentage of exogamous marriages within the parish between 1601-20 and 1641-60.⁸⁷ Problems arose, however, when the sex ratio of neighbouring communities was subject to similar biases, a situation exemplified by the experience of the Devonshire community of Colyton. From early in the seventeenth century, the sex ratio at burial

⁸³ Kitch, “Population movement”, 68.

⁸⁴ P. Clark, “Migration in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries”, in P. Clark and D. Souden, eds., *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (1987), 215.

⁸⁵ A. Kussmaul, *A general view of the rural economy of England 1538-1840* (Cambridge, 1990), 157-162. Her investigations centred on the putative effect on marriage opportunities of the switch between arable and pastoral farming during the two centuries after 1561.

⁸⁶ V. Brodsky Elliott, “Mobility and Marriage in Pre-Industrial England”, University of Cambridge Ph.D., 1978, 291; *ibid.*, Table 18, 325.

⁸⁷ Cited in Hindle, “Pauper Marriage”, 82.

in Colyton had become distinctly skewed. By the 1650s the pattern of burials, which in the 1550s had witnessed four males examples for every three female, had entirely reversed, suggesting a higher ratio of women to men within the general community, a factor Pam Sharpe has attributed to sex-specific patterns of migration, themselves determined by differential work opportunities. But while men in the Colyton region probably joined streams of migrants heading for the larger towns or cities, or, in the final instance, like William French, twenty-one, of Colyford, bound themselves apprentice on a ship heading for America, women were more likely to move from one village or small town to another in search of employment.⁸⁸ Consequently, the sex ratio of parishes nearby was also low, a situation that served only to enhance the adverse impact of migration on the pool of available marriage partners in Colyton.⁸⁹

By the later seventeenth century high inflows of female migrants to all urban areas appears to have led to unbalanced sex ratios within a number of provincial and market towns. This represented a diametric shift from the position apparent at the beginning of the century when urban centres had more commonly demonstrated a predominance of male migrants, and essentially reflects the influence of two structural changes: firstly the much reduced importance of apprenticeship, especially in London but also in other large towns and cities; and secondly the growing number of job opportunities available to women in the service sector.⁹⁰ Neither had the presence of biased sex ratios escaped the attention of contemporary statisticians. Gregory King's observations on the enumerations made under the Marriage Duty Act of 1695, for example, caused him to suggest the existence of a sex ratio of 77:100 in London, 89:100 in "other citties and market towns" and 101:100 in villages and hamlets, a situation he too attributed to an increase in the demand for female servants: "All great

⁸⁸ P. Sharpe, "Literally spinsters: a new interpretation of local economy and demography in Colyton in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991): 48-51.

⁸⁹ In a recent study of marriage patterns in Navarre, Spain, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, Jesús J. Sánchez Barricarte has indicated that such patterns were always closely related to employment opportunities and migratory trends. J.J. Sánchez Barricarte, "Changes in marriage patterns in the Spanish province of Navarre from the eighteenth to the twentieth century", *Continuity and Change*, 16 (2001): 87.

⁹⁰ D. Souden, "Migrants and the population structure of later seventeenth century provincial cities and market towns", in P. Clark, ed., *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800* (1984), 133-68. The situation in perhaps most noticeable in London, but other major cities such as York reference a similar shift. See R. Finlay, *Population and Metropolis. The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge, 1981), 140-1; D.V. Glass, "Notes on the Demography of London at the End of the Seventeenth Century", *Daedalus*, 97 (1968): 586; C. Galley, "Sixteenth and seventeenth century historical demography with special reference to York", University of Sheffield Ph.D., 1992, 162.

Towns require more maid than Men servants, the Country otherwise”.⁹¹ Moreover, King’s projected national average of 2.8 million women to 2.7 million men - a ratio of around 95:100 for those over the age of sixteen - lent considerable support to dominant theories on the failure of women to marry, by implying that the supply of suitably qualified men was insufficient to fulfil demand.⁹²

Therefore, while it has been demonstrated that employment opportunities had the capacity to impact unfavourably on marriage chances, contradictory trends are in evidence: the marriage rate appears to have declined in the early seventeenth century when urban areas were experiencing a surfeit of young male migrants and regained much of its former ground towards the end of the period when this surfeit had inverted to become female. Temporary shifts in sex ratios as a result of migratory activity beyond a localised level are then incapable on their own of providing a satisfactory explanation for the apparent failure of the courtship process. The answer, however, may well be more plausibly sought in the changing patterns of migration. Before 1650 many migrants were poor itinerant workers who moved from place to place in a system of relatively undefined and undifferentiated migration, in which localised movement tended to merge into longer distance travelling, based primarily on crude subsistence or push factors. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some London servants led highly mobile and relatively isolated lives, and if as Eversley has suggested, seventy-five to eighty per cent of marriages were either between residents of the same parish or between residents of parishes within a five mile radius, then subsistence migration was likely to have been an important factor in reducing marital opportunity.⁹³ By the Restoration period, however, the character of migration had undergone considerable evolution. Improved economic conditions appear to have reduced long distance subsistence migration, and as urban growth offered an increasing number of young men opportunities nearer to home, apprentices themselves were becoming more localised in their origins. Movements, according to Peter Clark and David Souden, were better structured and increasingly seasonal, geared to meet the changing needs of a more specialised labour market: the pattern of

⁹¹ Cited in R. Thompson, “Seventeenth-Century English and Colonial Sex Ratios: a Postscript”, *Population Studies*, 28 (1974): 161-2; D.V. Glass, “Two Papers on Gregory King”, in Glass and Eversley, eds., *Population*, 206.

⁹² Thompson, “Colonial”, 162.

⁹³ Elliott, “Mobility”, 281; D.E.C. Eversley, “Population History and Local History”, in E.A. Wrigley, ed., *An Introduction to English Historical Demography From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (1966), 21-2.

“muzzy, undifferentiated migration activity before the Civil War [shifted] to one increasingly overlaid by specialist, and in some measure, institutionalised, flows in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”.⁹⁴ Being organised and economically specific in nature, the migration of the later seventeenth century may therefore have proved significantly less detrimental to marriage opportunities than its disorganised antecedent, offering a more secure and predictable employment scenario and in addition making personal contacts easier to initiate and sustain.

Nevertheless, while the effect of structural economic change on marital opportunity could be mediated through the changing nature of migration, the permanent loss of a large number of marriageable young men in the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century arguably had nothing less than disastrous consequences for the subsequent progress of the English population. For while modern demographic historians have attributed little weight to the sudden disappearance of a considerable number of marriageable young men, contemporary comments indicated more than a passing awareness of the problem in hand. According to a ballad of the mid-seventeenth century,

A young man need never take thought how to wive,
For widows and maidens for husbands do strive,
Here's scant men enough for them all left alive,
They flock to the Church, like Bees to the hive.⁹⁵

Moreover, the reasons for this great depletion were not difficult for contemporaries to fathom. As Sir William Coventry indicated in 1670,

That we have fewer people than formerly is imputable not only by the hand of God on the late visitation, but more especially to the long continued diverting of the young and prolific people to the plantations and to the re-peopling of Ireland besides those whom the late civil wars devoured in England.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ P. Clark and D. Souden, “Introduction”, in Clark and Souden, *Migration*, 29. The Settlement Act of 1662 inhibited longer distance migration but allowed seasonal migration. See Clark, “Migration in England”, 238-242.

⁹⁵ Cited in MacFarlane, *Marriage*, 150.

The possibility that disease, emigration and death as a result of war were significant elements in the reduction of marriage opportunities during the early to mid-seventeenth century should not be lightly dismissed. Premature death as a result of infectious disease formed part and parcel of early modern existence, but the erratic and in many cases cataclysmic “visitations” of the plague could not fail to strike terror into the hearts of every individual during the Tudor and early Stuart periods. With little or no appreciation of its epidemiology, and a misguided policy on its containment, prevention of the plague was often ineffective; consequently death rates were high and sorrow widespread: “In every house grieffe striking up an Allarum: servants crying out for maisters: wives for husbands, parents for children, children for their mothers”.⁹⁷ Yet though the threat of death from the plague was an innate feature of both male and female experience, there were those who believed that certain visitations were more detrimental to one sex than another. In 1604, Francis Hering M.D., a member of the Royal College of Physicians, wrote of the plague outbreak in 1603, that “it hath been observed in this last mortality among us (the wounds whereof are yet fresh and bleeding) that women have passed thorow the pikes more easily and happily than men. So that this hath been called The womens year; because it is thought that for one woman, 6. or 10. men have died.”⁹⁸ Certainly by the early 1660s, when John Graunt was compiling his *Natural and Political Observations upon the Bills of Mortality*, contemporary male opinion in the capital was reportedly convinced of a gross female surplus among the population there: “Most men do believe,” Graunt noted, “that there be three Women for one Man”.⁹⁹

In modern times the existence of a bias in levels of morbidity and mortality as a result of the plague has received a measure of support. In its twentieth century manifestation the disease has demonstrated a definite propensity for healthy young adult males, with individual men apparently being twice as likely as women to become infected with the plague and five times as likely to die from it.¹⁰⁰ The extent to which such patterns have a historical precedent, however, remains contentious. In

⁹⁶ W. Coventry, *An Essay Concerning the Decay of Rents and their Remedies*, 1670, in Thirsk and Cooper, eds., *Economic Documents*, 80.

⁹⁷ T. Dekker, *The Wonderful Yeare, 1603 (1604-7?)*, sig. C4.

⁹⁸ F. Hering, *A Modest Defence of the Caveat given to the Wearers of Impoisoned Amulets* (1604), sig. B. Hering also suggested that some people had contracted the plague two or three times that year.

⁹⁹ Graunt himself believed there to be “fourteen Men for thirteen Women” in London at that time. Graunt, *Natural*, 385-6.

¹⁰⁰ S. Ell, “Iron in Two Seventeenth-Century Plague Epidemics”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985): 445.

1971, a study by M.F. and T.H. Hollingsworth, based on evidence gathered from the parish of St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate in London, indicated that mortality as a result of the plague had been significantly greater among men in the early seventeenth century than it had been among women. The figures were extremely suggestive. Within the parish as a whole the sex ratio of male burials to those of females was 200:100 in 1603 and 190:100 in 1625, compared with a pre-plague figure of 72:100, a fact the couple attributed to the greater cleanliness of women and their avoidance of the areas most likely to be rat-infested.¹⁰¹ Men were likely to have suffered an increased propensity to contract the disease, for they worked in granaries, docks and warehouses where rats were endemic, and in addition more frequently handled consignments of grain, cloth and other goods that were likely to harbour fleas.¹⁰² Nevertheless, London's young men appear to have been particularly susceptible to the plague in 1603. Enrolments of apprentices averaged seventy-four per cent above their pre-plague average after the epidemic of that year, and the aldermen of London were told in February of 1604 that "by reason of the great plague and mortality ... [many] ... apprentices and servants are lately dead ... whereby divers masters, householders, and shopkeepers do want apprentices and servants".¹⁰³

The problem confronting demographic historians, however, has been that the pattern the Hollingsworths uncovered in St. Botolph's did not repeat itself in similar studies of early modern plague-related deaths either at Colyton in Devon or Eyam in Derbyshire, and later research by Roger Finlay has done little to resolve this particular historical conundrum.¹⁰⁴ Although in numerical terms, more males than females died from the plague in the six London parishes Finlay analysed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, death rates were no higher in relative terms for men than women except during the 1603 outbreak. In addition there were wide variations between individual parishes and the relative significance of male and female mortality fluctuated both chronologically, and according to wealth. Why males appear to have been unusually susceptible in 1603, therefore, remains puzzling.

¹⁰¹ M.F. and T.H. Hollingsworth, "Plague mortality rates by age and sex in St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate, London, 1603", *Population Studies*, 25 (1971): 145.

¹⁰² S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 1989), 75.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰⁴ R. Schofield, "An Anatomy of an Epidemic: Colyton, November 1645 to November 1646", in *The Plague Reconsidered*, Local Population Studies Supplement (1977): 95-126; L. Bradley, "The Most Famous of All English Plagues A detailed analysis of the Plague at Eyam, 1665-6", *ibid.*, 63-94.

As Finlay had ultimately to conclude, “the study of differential plague mortality between males and females is therefore exceptionally difficult and little sense can be made of it.”¹⁰⁵

Fortunately emigration and premature death as a result of war constitute more visible variables in the search for the factors underlying differential sex ratios, and in addition, ones that are more easily quantified. During the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there was a fairly constant net loss of population as a result of outward migration. Though for much of the period the loss remained at a low level, from 1621 onwards the rate of exodus increased - as many as 69, 000 emigrants may have left England for the Americas in the 1630s alone, and numbers rose steadily throughout the following three decades to reach a peak in the period between 1651 and 1661.¹⁰⁶ Indeed figures derived from back projection by Wrigley and Schofield suggest that the total figure for net outflow during the seventy years between 1630 and 1699 could have been as high as 544, 000, representing around a tenth of the entire national population at that time.¹⁰⁷

Arguments continue to rage as to the respective relevance of the roles of economic and religious factors in propelling migrants abroad, but whatever the motivations of the emigrants might have been, the extent of the emigration in the mid-seventeenth century was exacerbated by the nature of those who emigrated. Though the majority of those migrating to the area of New England were family groups, often in search of religious freedoms, still the largest category of emigrants to the Americas in total were young single men in search of work. Unmarried young males constituted the greater proportion of all indentured servants who left Bristol for the West Indies during the 1650s, and a study of the occupational structure of indentured servants leaving Bristol for all the main American colonies between 1654 and 1662 has shown that of the 5, 133 individuals who emigrated during this period less than a quarter (1, 264) were female.¹⁰⁸ A similar picture is revealed by the research of Anthony Salerno in the county of Wiltshire: of 110 Wiltshire emigrants leaving Southampton between 1635 and 1638 bound for Massachussetts, by far the majority

¹⁰⁵ Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*, 130-1.

¹⁰⁶ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.11, 219.

¹⁰⁷ D. Cressy, *Coming Over. Migration and communication between England and New England in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 1987), 68; Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 224; Table A3.3, 532.

¹⁰⁸ D. Souden, “‘Rogues, whores and vagabonds’? Indentured servant emigrants to North America, and the case of mid-seventeenth-century Bristol”, *Social History*, 3 (1978), Table 6, 37.

were male and single, and between the ages of sixteen and thirty.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, it is his opinion that the nature of this out-migration contributed to the significant demographic decline in the Wiltshire region between the 1630s and the 1650s, a situation that was especially acute in the areas around Warminster and Trowbridge.¹¹⁰

On a national basis too, the balance of outward migration appears to have adversely affected levels of fertility, for Wrigley and Schofield have been able to demonstrate that fertility entered a marked trough between the quinquennia beginning in 1641 and 1686. While they recognise that this may in part be a function of the under registration of baptisms during the period of the commonwealth, the fact that the thirty-five years in question were ones of fairly heavy net outward migration has encouraged them to link the lower birthrate to reduced marriage opportunities for women: the dip in fertility from 1651 to 1681 coincided with a high age at first marriage for women and a high percentage that never married, and can therefore be understood in part as “an indirect result of the migration history of the period.”¹¹¹

Finally, many of the young men who chose to serve their country in the armed forces rather than seek their fortune abroad were also unwittingly removed from the pool of available marriage partners. England was involved in a number of damaging conflicts during the Tudor and Stuart periods as successive monarchs regularly entered into combat with Spain and France and later Holland. Yet the loss of life as a result of fighting before the mid-seventeenth century was insufficient to make deep inroads into marriage opportunities - it was the Civil Wars at home that were to prove most detrimental to the marriage prospects of young single women in the Tudor and Stuart periods. On one level, a number of publications sought to highlight the impact of the war on marriage and its corollary, procreation. Thus the *The Mid-wives just Petition of 1643* claimed that the present Civil War, in removing men from their homes “doth give beginning to a natural depopulation of towns and Cities, when the causes of populous fertility are any wayes hindered”, while more satirical pamphlets like *The Virgins Complaint for the losse of their Sweet-Hearts*, preferred to parody the effects of war in terms of sexually frustrated virgins: “And yet these men, young men

¹⁰⁹ Salerno, “ Social Background ”, 32-3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 43-4.

¹¹¹ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, 233.

... must be enticed and commanded, nay, sometimes prest to the warres, when wee desired rather they should have been pressing our necessities".¹¹²

On another level, the loss of life as a result of the Civil Wars among young men may have been little short of devastating. Contemporary statistics of those lost in battle appear to have been little more than rudimentary. Thomas Hobbes, for example, reckoned that some hundred thousand English men had perished during the conflagrations, while William Petty put the figure much higher at around three hundred thousand.¹¹³ Modern estimates, too, remain nebulous, but have been grounded in a more secure statistical reality. Figures collated from some 635 recorded incidents of confrontation from the bloodiest battle of Marston Moor to a skirmish in Doncaster where one man was killed, reveal a conservative estimate of around eighty-five thousand casualties.¹¹⁴ To numbers of those killed in combat, however, must be added those who lost their lives either accidentally, or as a result of illness. Daily accidents were commonplace - "We bury more toes and fingers than we do men" - and weapons were inherently dangerous, even in the hands of skilled operators.¹¹⁵ Moreover, before the advent of modern medical practices and an effective awareness of the role of hygiene in public health, more soldiers may have died from war-related disease than combat *per se*. Allowing for slightly more indirect than direct deaths and a number of accidents may therefore raise the final toll of the mid-century conflict to a figure of one hundred and eighty-five thousand. Loss of life among Englishmen would then have been more significant, in proportionate terms, than it was to prove in the most destructive of all subsequent European conflicts - the First World War.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Anon., *The Mid-wives just Petition, or the complaint of divers good Gentlewomen of that faculty*, (1643), sig. A1; Anon., *The Virgins Complaint, for the losse of their Sweet-Hearts* (1643), 3.

¹¹³ Cited in C. Carlton, "The Impact of the Fighting", in J. Morrill, ed., *The Impact of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), 17.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁶ The size of the population size during the Interregnum has been estimated at around 5.2 million. See Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Appendix A3.3, 532. As much as 3.6 per cent of the population may then have perished as a result of the Civil Wars, compared with 2.6 per cent in the First World War and 0.6 percent in the Second. See Carlton, "Impact", 21. In France after the First World War, however, levels of celibacy did not rise as much as might be expected. A smaller proportion of men remained single, a higher proportion of women married foreigners and widowers and divorced men, and the normal pattern of age differences between spouses was distorted. Cited in Watkins, "Spinsters", 318.

IV. The role of choice

Since current theories of early modern marriage behaviour, largely informed by the strength of the contemporary marital discourse and the neo-Malthusian approach of demographic historians, have tended to assign most weight to the failure of individuals to marry, the content of this chapter so far has been concerned to identify a number of circumstances that may have functioned to reduce the marital opportunities available to individuals in seventeenth century England. However, by turning the argument on its head, and seeking out instead the existence of factors that may have encouraged young people to remain single, it may be possible to offer a more holistic account of marriage behaviour than is currently available.

Though there were relatively few exceptions to the Protestant marriage ideal, there is little doubt, as Jean-Louis Flandrin has indicated, that the seventeenth century witnessed the development of a greater level of freedom of choice in marriage partner.¹¹⁷ Moreover, his argument has received further elaboration in the work of Lawrence Stone, whose theory of the rise of “affective individualism” in the seventeenth century is especially significant in this context, because it postulates a new recognition of the need for personal autonomy and the individual pursuit of happiness.¹¹⁸ Whether the greater articulation of choice can then be equated with increased levels of freedom in terms of whom individuals could marry or more simply in terms of when is a matter for debate, but it is clear from the literature that the importance of the need for a careful choice formed a major element in the sphere of marital theory, a situation that would have offered individuals with a penchant for the single life considerable room for manoeuvre. The extent to which a positive decision to remain single was possible within the context of seventeenth century England then forms the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

Certainly there was a commonly held belief by the later seventeenth century that marriage was no longer enjoying universal appeal. In 1673 the anonymous author of the pamphlet entitled *An Account of Marriage* attempted to defend the institution from “the unjust attacks of the Age”, while Thomas Hodges, in clear misogynist vein, laid the blame for the falling marriage rate squarely on the nature of women: “The pride and peevishness of some Wives to their Husbands in our dayes, hath brought an ill report on Matrimony; and ’tis to be feared, hath frightened many

¹¹⁷ J.L. Flandrin, *Families in Former Times* (Cambridge, 1979), 135.

from the remedy of Marriage, into the Disease of Adultery and Uncleaness.”¹¹⁹ The problem appeared most acute amongst young gentlemen. A satirical pamphlet of 1675 went so far as to suggest that “a whore is become a necessary Appurtenance, and to keep her nobly part of the character of a Gentleman”, and by 1690 a perceived preference for celibacy was increasingly related to the promiscuous behaviour of men in the higher status groups: “Neglect and abuse of marriage lies most among the Men of Quality, and the Rich, who partly out of debauched principle; and partly out of a covetous humour forbear to marry”.¹²⁰ By 1693 therefore, it was wine and loose women that bore the brunt of responsibility for male antipathy. As the petitioning ladies of London and Westminster woefully complained,

’Tis a burning shame, and it highlie concerns the wisdom of the nation to prevent it, that the young fellows of the Town should scandalouslie abandon themselves to the Bottle. They ply their Glasses too warmlie to think of anie thing else; and if the liquor happens to inspire them with anie kind Inclinations, the next Street furnishes them with store of conveniences to relieve their Appetite. And this leads us to the second block in our way, which is the intolerable multitude of Mistresses, who to the great prejudice of the publick, divert the course of those streams, which would otherwise run in the regular Channel of matrimonie.¹²¹

That there were more men retaining their single status appeared in little doubt. In the sphere of literature, Cotton’s *Erotopolis*, an allegorical exposition of England in 1684, metaphorically represented the supposedly large number of single men as “Batchelors Buttons”, a colloquial reference to a common and familiar flower; in the sphere of politics, William Petty’s treatise *A discourse of taxes and contributions* (1689) outlined his considered opinion that there was a greater proportion of males among the general population in England than females - “the said disproportion *pro tanto* hindering procreation”.¹²² The contemporary understanding of the presence of a

¹¹⁸ Stone, *Family*, esp. Part 4.

¹¹⁹ T. Hodges, *A Treatise of Marriage* (1673), 5.

¹²⁰ Anon., *The Maids Complaint Against the Batchelors* (1675), 6; Anon., *Marriage Promoted*, 28.

¹²¹ Anon., *The Petition of the Ladies of London and Westminster to the Honourable House of Husbands* (1693), 2.

¹²² C. Cotton, *Erotopolis, The Present State of Betty-Land* (1684), 3; W. Petty, *A discourse of taxes and contributions* (1689), 7.

large number of eligible bachelors therefore elicited considerable social anxiety. Though concern with the moral and social rationale for marriage had been apparent from the sixteenth century - the emphasis of the early protestant conduct books was one of social stability through moral purity - by the later seventeenth century increased levels of celibacy had raised the spectre of political and economic collapse. In the developing spirit of statistical enquiry that characterised the Restoration period, production, consumption and labour had come to the fore as crucial factors in the generation of national wealth, causing population to emerge as a fundamental category of political and economic analysis. Conscious decisions to remain celibate were therefore inconsistent with received notions on the aims and purposes of marriage, and in addition with the interests of the nation: "The Institution of Mariage" as George Saville, the Marquis of Halifax pointed out to his daughter, "is too sacred to admit of a Liberty of Objection to it".¹²³ The mercantilist critique appears to have crystallised in the debate over the passage of the Marriage Duty Act in 1694, for by imposing a yearly tax on bachelors over the age of twenty-five and childless widowers, the act aimed to create an incentive for unmarried men to marry, while contemporaneously providing the funds needed to fight a war against France.¹²⁴

Yet despite the later seventeenth century moral panic over falling marriage rates there is little evidence to suggest a generalised rejection of the institution itself. Concerns over the tendencies of young gentlemen to remain single may have been grounded in historical reality - Hollingsworth's study of the British peerage has suggested a declining marriage rate amongst this status group in the seventeenth century which was maintained into the following one - but the rebound in marriage rates amongst the lower social groups after the mid-seventeenth century nadir indicates the absence of any serious tendency towards celibacy among the bulk of the population.¹²⁵ Moreover, documented exemplars of such self-determination are

¹²³ Saville, *New Year Gift*, 31.

¹²⁴ The Marriage Duty Act came into force in 1695, levying taxes on burials, births, marriages, and annual dues upon bachelors over twenty-five and childless widowers, initially to raise finance to wage war on France. See D.V. Glass, ed., *London Inhabitants Within the Walls 1695*, London Record Society, 2 (1966): ix. A measure of its success is reflected in the low male mean age at marriage for the quinquennium immediately following its implementation. See Wrigley et al., *English Population*, 139.

¹²⁵ Hollingsworth, "Demography", 10-19. R.A. Houlbrooke has suggested a number of reasons for this: the abolition of the Court of Wards; the reduced need for political allies; the growth of a national marriage market. Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 65. The anti-matrimonial tendencies of young gentlemen have also been related to the massive increase in seventeenth century aristocratic bridal portions. See R.B. Outhwaite, "Marriage as business: opinions on the rise in aristocratic bridal portions

relatively unique. An early case in point is that of Blanche Perry of Hereford. Employed at the royal court as a maid servant to the young Elizabeth, she died in 1589 at the age of eighty-two, claiming to have chosen a single life in preference to marriage in order to devote herself to the service of her monarch:

So that my tyme I thus did passe awaye
A maed in court, and never no man's wife,
Sworne of Queene Ellsbeth's hedd chamber allways,
With Maeden Queene a mayde did end my lyfe.¹²⁶

Richard Napier, the seventeenth century physician and astrologer, also appears to have preferred a life apart from marriage. For while attempting to calculate his own astrological nativity, Napier felt impelled to jot down in addition that he had "mightily no mind to marry but a great mind to all manner of studies and arts".¹²⁷ More common in the writings of known celibates, however, are the narratives which frame individual states of celibacy within the dominant cultural context of marriage failure: William Stout recorded in his autobiography his continued inability to find a suitable partner; Hester Pinney found she was unable to marry George Booth the love of her life after a rise in his family's social status rendered such a marriage socially and financially impossible; Joyce Jeffreys appears to have preferred to leave the responsibility for her failure to marry in the hands of a greater power, residing in 1640 as an elderly spinster in Hereford "to God's pleasure".¹²⁸

In spite of the overall significance of marriage in the contemporary discourse, the problematic nature of married life, especially from the male viewpoint, was regularly parodied in ballads and pamphlets. *A Discourse of the Married and Single Life, herein by Discovering the Misery of the one is plainly declared the felicity of the other* (1621) and *The batchelors delight* (1622) constituted two examples of a genre that sought to juxtapose the idyllic happiness of a single life with the manifold miseries attending the matrimonial estate. However, there were also more serious

in early modern England", in N. McKendrick and R.B. Outhwaite, eds., *Business Life and Public Policy* (Cambridge, 1986), 21-37.

¹²⁶ D.M. Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (1957), 135.

¹²⁷ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 15.

¹²⁸ Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 141-2; P. Sharpe, "Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England", *Gender and History*, 11 (1999): 217; *Joyce Jeffreys Diary*, British Museum Egerton MS 3054, 37.

offerings from male authors who chose to champion the celibate cause. A number of prescriptive authors, like William Perkins, continued to accept the value of celibacy for men in the service of God (if they had “the gift of continence”): “For first it freeth a man from many great cares of household affairs. Againe, it maketh him much more fit and disposed to meditate of heavenly things without distraction of mind”.¹²⁹ Yet others sought to highlight its merit in terms of the state. In his essay “Of Marriage And Single Life”, Francis Bacon, for example, elected to outline the distractive nature of married life, pointing instead to the benefits society could expect to gain from those who decided to remain single: “Certainly the best workes, and of greatest Merit for the Publike, have proceeded from the unmarried or Childlesse Men; which both in Affection, and Meanes, have married and endowed the Publike”. Wives and children, in his opinion were “impediments to great enterprises” while unmarried men constituted the “best Friends; best Masters; best Servants”.¹³⁰

The notion that the activities of families were a seductive and dangerous diversion from service to the public cause - an idea of central importance in classical republican thought - constituted an influential element in political discussion prior to the onset of the Civil Wars.¹³¹ However, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict the concept of celibacy received even greater articulation as the image of the independent citizen, active in the service of the state, helped legitimate male arguments in favour of celibacy. Thus Sir John Denham’s wistful eulogy entitled “Friendship and the Single Life Against Love and Marriage” (1668), expounded at length on the social merits of bachelorhood as the only estate that enabled a man to spend his time, enthusiasm and money in a range of altruistic pursuits: “His Life, his Zeal, his Wealth attends, His Prince, his Country, and his Friends”.¹³² Arguments spilled over into the religious sphere too, effecting a limited revival of the debate over priestly celibacy. Freed from the limitations of sexual activity and family

¹²⁹ Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 12. Archbishop Whitgift in the later sixteenth century and Archbishop Laud in the 1640s were among the more high profile ministers who preferred to retain their celibate status. See P. Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (1993), 51.

¹³⁰ F. Bacon, *The Essays or Counsells, Civill and Morall. Newly enlarged* (1625), Number 8, “Of Marriage And Single Life”, 36-7.

¹³¹ A. Hughes, “Women, Men and Politics in the English Civil War”, University of Keele Inaugural Lecture, 8th October 1997 (Keele University), 12.

¹³² Cited in G. Greer, J. Medoff, M. Sansone and S. Hastings (hereafter Greer et al.), *Kissing the Rod. An Anthology of Seventeenth Century Women’s Verse* (London, 1988), 363. Denham was married twice, but his second marriage to the eighteen-year old Margaret Brooke in May 1665 was ill-fated. Margaret soon became known as the Duke of York’s mistress, and after her death in January 1667

responsibility, priests would prove better servants to their Lord on earth, eliciting for themselves in the process “a higher reward and crown in the world to come”.¹³³

By the later seventeenth century a number of female writers had also taken up the challenge to the Protestant marriage ideal, and in doing so significantly raised the profile of female celibacy. Catholic writers had continued to support the decisions of single women to remain unmarried in the service of God, even if the religious orthodoxy in England denied the value of such action (books written for single women before the Civil Wars were intended for those in religious orders), but prior to 1640 there was no serious discussion or acceptance of permanent celibacy for women outside the ecclesiastical sphere.¹³⁴ In the post-war period, however, the focus shifted to the civic dimension as women such as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and later Aphra Behn experimented in the medium of print with the concept of female friendship and the single existence.¹³⁵ Ballads, too, participated in rejecting the idea that marriage for women was universally desirable. The West Country maid in “Tobias’ observation” of 1687, for example, had no intention of relinquishing her freedom:

I live as well contented as any Maid can.
What need I entangle my self with a Man?
I walk where I please at my own command,
I need not say ‘Shall I, pray shall I husband?’
.....
For I have no fancy to be made a Wife,
Nor ne’r was concern’d with no man in my Life
And for to live single it is my delight
And so honest young-man, I wish you good-night.¹³⁶

Denham was accused of poisoning her with a cup of chocolate. *Dictionary of National Biography*, CD-Rom version 1.1 (Oxford, 1998).

¹³³ A. Woodhead, *A Discourse Concerning the Celibacy of the Clergy* (Oxford 1687), 4.

¹³⁴ S. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino, 1982), 96.

¹³⁵ See for example, M. Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668); Behn, *Ten Pleasures*.

¹³⁶ Cited in C. Peters, “Single women in early modern England: attitudes and expectations”, *Continuity and Change*, 12 (1997): 340.

It was Jane Barker's damning exposé of social attitudes towards spinsters, however, and her insistence that single women could be of civic benefit that marked out her poem "A Virgin life" as one of special significance. For in echoing the earlier sentiments of Sir John Denham, she adapted the Baconian rhetoric of altruistic rationality to the female sphere:

The neighbouring poor are her adopted heirs,
And less she cares, for her own good than theirs.
And by obedience testifies she can
Be's good a subject as the stoutest man.
She to her church, such filial duty pays,
That one wou'd think she'd lived ith' pristine days.
Her whole lives business, she drives to these ends,
To serve her god, her neighbour, and her friends.¹³⁷

Though the full articulation of female choice appears most prominently in the literature of the later seventeenth century, there is little reason to suspect that its apparent availability was anything other than the culmination of a trend which can be traced back to much earlier generations of single women. In this more nuanced interpretation of demographic change, the negative shifts in fertility visible in the first half of the seventeenth century may not have been caused so much by the failure of women to marry as by the decisions of women to remain single. Yet in order to remain single, women clearly required a minimal level of financial stability. The extent to which large numbers of women would actively have preferred a state of celibacy over one of marriage is likely to remain open to debate, but clearly the ability to realise a celibate existence on a day-to-day basis without a measure of economic independence would have proved impracticable. To that end research undertaken on the medieval period has already revealed the existence of a link between female marriage levels and economic autonomy. Richard Smith, for instance, has argued that in the conditions of demographic malaise of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries labour shortages gave rise to a substantial expansion of unmarried women

¹³⁷ J. Barker, "A Virgin life" (1688), in Greer et al., *Kissing the Rod*, 360-1. Barker converted to Catholicism during the reign of James II and spent the period between 1688 and 1713 in France. But she never took holy orders, instead choosing to support herself through novel writing. *Ibid.*, 354-5.

working outside their natal household, often in towns, and especially in service. The consequence of this was a sharp rise in the proportion of those who never married.¹³⁸ P.J.P. Goldberg, too, has hypothesised that the greater the economic autonomy of medieval women, the greater the control they exercised over their own lives, the later their marriages would tend to be, and the lower the associated marriage rate.¹³⁹

This clearly has continuing relevance in the context of the Tudor and Stuart eras. Alice Wandesford, later to become Mrs. Alice Thornton, need never have entered the marital estate. She had no romantic inclinations towards William, her future husband. Furthermore she recognised she had the capacity to maintain an independent existence: “As to the fortune left by my father, it was faire, and more then competent, soe that I needed not fear (by God’s blessing) to have bin troublesome to my friends”. But under the weight of continued pressure from friends and relatives Alice finally conceded and accepted William’s suit, convinced that the marriage “might tend to the good of the whole family”.¹⁴⁰ Economic security, as the case of Alice indicates, was insufficient in itself to determine celibacy - marriage decisions were also contingent upon a host of psychological, social and religious factors, in addition, of course, to the availability of suitable partners.

Yet relatively few women would have enjoyed the benefit of Alice’s considerable financial advantage. Consequently, traditional accounts of marriage behaviour have tended to problematise the position of the greater proportion of women below the level of the gentry, who may have sustained considerable difficulty in attempting to subsist in the long term without access to the resources of a partner. A major stumbling block to the revision of such attitudes so far has been the failure of historical accounts to integrate a theory of increased economic autonomy into the scenario of female employment: the image of women’s work in the Tudor and Stuart periods is largely one of marginalisation, underemployment and low remuneration.¹⁴¹ Yet there was one activity that did have the capacity to offer security and allow independence to those with at least a measure of liquid capital which to date has been largely neglected by historians: that of lending money for profit.

¹³⁸ Smith, “Geographical”, 44.

¹³⁹ P.J.P. Goldberg, “‘For Better, For Worse’: Marriage and Economic Opportunity for Women in Town and Country”, in Goldberg, ed., *Woman*, 108-9.

¹⁴⁰ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 75, 62.

¹⁴¹ J.M. Bennett, “‘History that Stands Still’: Women’s Work in the European Past”, *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988): 278.

The practice of lending money was not a new phenomenon in the early modern period, for a mass of ecclesiastical and secular legislation on the subject of usury testifies amply to the prevalence of lending and borrowing throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁴² But the legalisation of the taking of interest by the statute of 1571, and the decision to set official interest rates at ten per cent, injected new life into the credit business, regulated its workings and further encouraged its development.¹⁴³ Significant problems remain in attempting to measure the nature and extent of money lending in the early modern period, for credit mechanisms were widely diffused across the social and economic strata of early modern communities as part of a larger pattern of social behaviour.¹⁴⁴ The lack of sufficient specie and problems of liquidity ensured that credit, both in terms of deferred payment and money-lending, was a necessary and widespread market tool, a factor that often renders problematic scholars' attempts to separate profitable or formal money-lending *per se* from the mass of more informal credit arrangements.¹⁴⁵ Interest-bearing lending was increasingly secured by contractual agreements, but the mere absence of contract should not lead to the assumption that interest was not charged.¹⁴⁶ In addition, it is the money-lending activities of single women in the early modern period that are most heavily obscured in the historical record. The relative absence of women from all surviving documentation, for the most part the result of their inferior legal status, has ensured that the parameters of lending activity determining the extent of spinster involvement have largely been established around a small number of wealthy single women of middling or genteel status, most notably Hester Pinney and Joyce Jeffreys.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² T Wilson, *A Discourse upon Usury* (1572), ed. R.H. Tawney (London, 1925), 19.

¹⁴³ C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), 114.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, esp. ch. 5.

¹⁴⁵ The inadequacy of the money supply ensured that economic expansion was largely based on credit. See C. Muldrew, " 'Hard Food for Midas': cash and its social value in early modern England", *Past and Present*, 170 (2001): 87-93. Formal lending in this context is defined as all lending secured by formal credit instruments. This includes inventory references to bonds, bills, and mortgages; informal lending refers to all other unspecified lending.

¹⁴⁶ Muldrew, *Economy*, 315.

¹⁴⁷ Joyce Jeffreys of Ham Castle in Worcestershire indulged both in farming and in horse breeding and dealing, but the main source of her income was derived from the "toleration" or "consideration" for money on mortgage or loan - in 1638 she had £3 250 invested in bonds at an annual rate of eight per cent. Hester Pinney, too, displayed a considerable measure of entrepreneurial spirit - in addition to the joint running of the family lace business she was successfully engaged in extensive financial dealings before she reached the age of thirty, acting as a banker to country relations and making numerous personal loans. See Griffiths, "Joyce Jeffreys", 12; Sharpe, "Dealing", 218.

However, research completed in the course of this project can now reveal the involvement of single women in the lending network to have been much more extensive than has previously been suspected. Though earlier work on probate inventories from the east Midlands and Norfolk in the period between 1650 and 1720 suggested that around forty per cent of all testators were engaged in various combinations of formal and informal lending, analysis of probate material from the Lincolnshire and Cheshire regions between 1601 and 1700 shows a clear indication of the much higher levels of participation amongst single women: fifty-six per cent of the documents of Lincolnshire spinsters included some reference to lending, and in the case of Cheshire this figure reached the higher level of sixty-three per cent.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, while it has already been recognised that it was not unusual for wealthy spinsters to invest their capital in credits, the evidence offered here suggests that all wealth groups represented in the probate sample were involved to a greater or lesser degree in money-lending, their lending ability apparently determined more often by their desire to do so than by the level of assets at their disposal. Though there were a number of affluent spinsters in the sample - Anne Wright of Nantwich, for example, a wealthy gentlewoman whose total personal assets exceeded a thousand pounds, had lent out £246 in bonds - there were many other lenders in Cheshire and Lincolnshire who enjoyed access to more modest cash sums: Alice Buckley, a servant from Wrenbury in Cheshire, had no personal assets other than the £4 she had lent out in bills; Margit Bettes from Gretham in Lincolnshire had £6 owing to her “upon specialitie”; Margaret Ferribie, a resident in the small market town of Barton upon Humber (also in Lincolnshire), had lent out a total of £10 to various locals in bonds and bills. She supplemented her income from lending by spinning cloth.¹⁴⁹

Details of the range of amounts lent out by the single women surveyed in the study are outlined more clearly in Table 3.1.

¹⁴⁸ 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): 102.

¹⁴⁹ C.R.O. WS 1634, Anne Wright; C.R.O. WS 1649, Alice Buckley; Lincolnshire Archive Office (hereafter L.A.O.) INV 199/381, 1616, Margit Bettes; L.A.O. LCC AD 1628/101, Margaret Ferribie. A loan on “specialty” was arranged by special contract, under seal, similar to a bond.

Table 3.1: Proportional spread of debts in percentages in the probate documents of Cheshire and Lincolnshire single females, 1601-1700.

Amount	Cheshire women (n = 310)	Lincolnshire women (n = 154)
Less than £5	9	20
£5 to £9	12	19
£10 to £49	49	47
£50 to £99	17	7
£100 or more	13	7
Total	100	100

As the table above indicates, the bulk of all female lenders in Lincolnshire and Cheshire were owed on average between £10 and £50, although the spread of the Cheshire debts was skewed more heavily towards the upper end of the range than was the case in Lincolnshire. Nevertheless, from the poorest woman in the sample with less than £5 to offer to the richest spinster with cash resources in excess of £2, 000, the single women surveyed in this study appear to have been prepared to make their assets available to the community in the form of credit.

What is perhaps most interesting in the present context, however, is the fact that a rising percentage of the single women who were involved in the business of lending appear to have been doing so on a formal basis for the purpose of profit.¹⁵⁰ The proportion of women's inventories that included one or more references to specific instruments of debt - in the form of bonds, bills, mortgages or loans "with speciality" - rose markedly over the course of the seventeenth century, although the bulk of the formal lending appears to have remained short term in nature. At the same time, as Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below outline, the proportion of those solely recording informal lending underwent decline.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Informal lending in the context of this research does not, as indicated earlier, preclude the possibility of profitable lending, but the appearance of formal credit instruments is taken to be a clear indication of profitable intent.

¹⁵¹ Only three of the single women were involved in mortgaging, and although there are only occasional references to the date at which the loan was to be repaid, bills and bonds were usually short-term lending instruments.

Table 3.2: Proportion of Cheshire single women involved in lending, 1601-1700.¹⁵²

Decade	Number of documents (total = 449)	% lending¹⁵³	% formal lenders	% informal lenders	Formal as % of all lenders
1601-10	18	72	33	39	46
1611-20	35	69	31	38	46
1621-30	41	76	37	39	48
1631-40	36	64	44	19	70
1661-70	87	68	53	15	78
1671-80	80	66	43	24	64
1681-90	85	52	37	15	70
1691-1700	67	57	48	9	84

Table 3.3: Proportion of Lincolnshire single women involved in lending, 1601-1700.

Decade	Number of inventories (total = 267)	% lending	% formal lenders	% informal lenders	Formal as % of all lenders
1601-10	18	50	17	33	33
1611-20	38	63	31	32	50
1621-30	41	41	17	24	41
1631-40	43	56	30	26	54
1661-70	44	75	55	20	73
1671-80	36	58	42	17	71
1681-90	24	46	42	4	91
1691-1700	23	57	30	26	54

¹⁵² Since the number of documents surviving from the Interregnum is very small, and the possibility of bias therefore greatly increased, the decades of the 1640s and 1650s have not been included in the statistical sample.

Though the two regions display differing tendencies towards overall lending activity - in Cheshire the absolute proportion of all lenders falls from seventy-two per cent to fifty-seven per cent over the course of the seventeenth century while in Lincolnshire the comparable figure rises from fifty per cent to fifty-seven per cent - in both regions there is evidence of a shift away from informal towards more formal lending arrangements. The proportion of formal lenders in Lincolnshire did fall back during the final decade of the century, but the move towards formalised lending in both counties nevertheless remains clear: the balance between formal and informal lending, heavily weighted in favour of the latter at the beginning of the century, had by the end undergone a complete reversal.¹⁵⁴ This no doubt reflects the increasing emphasis on the contractual nature of interpersonal economic relationships outlined recently in the work of Craig Muldrew, but may also have been a function of the unusually large rises in the levels of debt.¹⁵⁵ In Lincolnshire, the mean female debt amongst those formally lending increased from £10 in the period 1601-10 to £111 in that of 1691-1700, with the greatest gains being made during the Restoration period. A less momentous, but nevertheless equally significant rise over the same period is apparent among the Cheshire women, with average sums rising from £42 during 1601-10 to reach £156 between 1691-1700.

It may also have been the means whereby single women attempted to secure their economic independence, for in terms of annual income, a relatively modest cash sum enjoyed considerable economic potential. Access to a figure of around £20 - an amount a sizeable proportion of husbandmen's daughters may feasibly have received as their marriage portion and one that was not uncommon among charitable trusts - could, under the prevailing interest rate of ten per cent, have provided an annual income of £2 in the early seventeenth century.¹⁵⁶ Clearly such revenue would have been entirely dependent upon the prompt payment of the interest due on the loan, and

¹⁵³ The combined figures for informal and formal lending may not always equal that for total lending as a result of rounding.

¹⁵⁴ The most likely explanation for this is the harvest failures of the 1690s. The proportion of formal lenders also fell back in Lincolnshire in the 1620s during an earlier period of agricultural depression.

¹⁵⁵ Muldrew, *Economy*, 315.

¹⁵⁶ Though the amount a young girl received as her portion reflected her individual economic and social status, local studies can offer some idea of the amounts involved. Alan Macfarlane has suggested that husbandmen's daughters in one Westmoreland parish received between £10 and £50, but mostly less than £20, and labourers' daughters between £1 and £5; Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 264. In eighty Selby wills, most bequests to the daughters of yeomen and more substantial craftsmen were for £20, or £10 for the daughters of husbandmen, labourers, and poorer craftsmen and yeomen. Orphans of the Red

since the full extent of default as yet remains unclear, in practical terms, the success of lending as an income-generating activity at present must remain speculative.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, in theory, lending could have offered single women with free capital a route to economic independence. The bulk of the women in both the Lincolnshire and Cheshire regions were in control of liquid assets valued at between £10 and £50, which, under standard conditions of repayment, would have delivered them an annual income of between £1 and £5 in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Even after the legal interest rate had fallen to eight per cent in 1624, reducing the yearly amount to between 16s. and £4, lending still represented a generous return relative to the other remunerative opportunities: the likely salary for women in service, whether as servants in husbandry or household maids, ranged between £1 and £2 per annum with room and board.¹⁵⁸ Any young woman not contracted to a household would clearly have needed to take the cost of her board and lodging into account, but since the economy was geared towards female dependency (a woman was expected to live under the roof of her father or master until she married, and then under that of her husband) women's earnings in other employment sectors also failed to reflect the full cost of their upkeep: outside of service a woman could expect to earn little more than 1s. a week, or just over £2 per annum if work was regular and forthcoming.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, lending had an additional advantage in that it did not place undue restrictions on women's time or energy. While lending for many unmarried women may have constituted their single most important source of income, it would rarely have been their only source; inventory records of single women in Lincolnshire and Cheshire indicate their customary participation in a variety of complementary enterprises, which ranged between farming, renting out animals and producing dairy goods and included spinning, weaving, sewing, washing, ironing and innumerable other tasks of a menial, irregular and poorly paid nature. For a considerable proportion of single women, independence, in addition to having been achievable,

Maids School might be given £10 or £20 on marriage. See A.L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993), 88 (cf. £20 donation from the Laud charity above).

¹⁵⁷ The amount of debt litigation involving single women awaits further investigation. Though interest was always charged on bonds because of the high demand for secure credit, only a small number of inventories referenced the amount of interest owed by debtors, and only occasionally were there indications of interest payments that were overdue. See Muldrew, *Economy*, 113.

¹⁵⁸ The legal interest rate fell to eight per cent in 1624 and six per cent in 1651. See S. Homer, *A History of Interest Rates* (New Brunswick, 1963), 127. Erickson, *Women*, 85. Henry Best's female servants, for example, were paid anything from 10s. to £1 4s. per annum in the 1620s and 1630s, depending on duties, age and experience. See Woodward, ed., *Henry Best*, 178-91.

may also have proved comparatively comfortable. If a man could have enjoyed a relatively nutritious diet for around 2d. per day, as Donald Woodward has suggested, a cash sum of £30 invested wisely in the early seventeenth century would have been capable of providing a woman with a more than tolerable living standard.¹⁶⁰ It proves not insignificant then that almost half the single women in the Chester region between 1600 and 1625 had at least £30 at their disposal.

Furthermore, as Table 3.4 below demonstrates, all singles saw a rise in personal wealth in real terms over the course of the seventeenth century, although this rise was not equally distributed between them.

Table 3.4: Comparisons of the mean inventories of single men in Lincolnshire and single women in Lincolnshire and Cheshire between the periods 1601-10 and 1691-1700 (excluding debts and leases).

Inventory group	No.	Mean Inv 1601-10 (£)	No.	Mean Inv. 1691-1700 (£)	Value of 1601-10 mean in real terms in 1691-1700 (£)¹⁶¹
Cheshire Women	17	10	45	48	14
Lincolnshire Men	39	13	25	59	18
Lincolnshire Women	17	10	23	28	14

While single women in Lincolnshire managed to increase their personal wealth by a factor of 2.8 between the periods 1601-10 and 1691-1700, which saw the value of their mean inventory rise from £10 to £28 over the century in question, the

¹⁵⁹ Erickson, *Women*, 15.

¹⁶⁰ Woodward, *Men*, 216.

¹⁶¹ Despite its deficiencies, the Phelps-Brown Hopkins price series remains the best estimate of changes in the price of consumables over the course of the seventeenth century. Here the series has been used to determine the change in prices between the decades 1601-10 and 1691-1700: taking the first decade as 100 gives an index of 138.24 for the final decade. See E.H. Phelps Brown and S.V. Hopkins, "Seven centuries of the prices of consumables, compared with builders' wage-rates", in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed., *Essays in Economic History, Volume II* (1962), 179-196. For a critique of the price data available see I. Blanchard, "Population Change, Enclosure, and the Early Tudor Economy", *Economic History Review*, 23 (1970): 429-31.

synchronous improvement amongst the single women in Cheshire was much more marked: though they began the century at the same base level as their Lincolnshire counterparts (£10), the Cheshire spinsters succeeded in raising the value of their mean inventory by a factor of 4.8 over the course of the century as a whole, so that by the final decade they were enjoying a level of personal wealth that amounted on average to the value of £48. In relative terms, this rise was even greater than that experienced by the single men in Lincolnshire, whose average personal wealth rose over the course of the century from a figure of £13 to one of £59, increasing by a factor of only 4.5.

The extent to which single women perceived this benefit purely in personal terms, however, must remain subject to interpretation: marriage was neither constructed nor envisaged merely in terms of individual benefit. It was a commonly held belief that “when the son of a house is married, the family is reckoned to be a gainer: when a daughter is married, quite the contrary”.¹⁶² Daughters’ marriages could place severe strain on parental resources as parents struggled to provide their daughters with a sum commensurate with their social status, and difficulties in raising a portion reverberated right across the social spectrum. In the same way as the marriages of some aristocratic daughters may have been “sacrificed” in order to improve the prospects of their sisters, so the portions of young women lower down the social ladder may have proved an essential element in family survival strategies, particularly under conditions of economic exigency.¹⁶³ As Pam Sharpe has suggested, for middling families like the lace-making Pinneys, “economic vicissitudes and greed could force them to delay or exert significant pressure against daughters marriages in this era.”¹⁶⁴ Because scope for individual action was inevitably restricted by family circumstance, shifting patterns of celibacy must be located in the familial and the communal as well as the individual context. Lending in the seventeenth century was constructed in terms of a mixture of Christian theology, the ethics of neighbourliness and classical notions of obligation; as John Blaxton argued in 1634, “Every man is to

¹⁶² Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 270.

¹⁶³ Hufton, *Prospect*, 64-5. Sir Ralph Verney withheld his sisters’ portions because of the unfavourable financial situation of the family. See Whyman, *Sociability*, 127.

¹⁶⁴ Sharpe, “Dealing”, 226.

his neighbour a debtor, not onely of that which himselfe borroweth, but of whatsoever his neighbour needeth.”¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, Holderness’ detailed study of inventories in the century after 1650, which indicated peaks of lending activity in periods of crisis when prices for local cash commodities were high, has led him to assume that the distribution of credit obeyed “a clearly defined and explicable logic within a well-developed and sophisticated credit system”.¹⁶⁶ Viewed in these terms, the lending activities of single women in particular appear as a flexible and necessary feature of the local credit system, and their liquid assets as a valuable local resource: since those inventories in which the direction of the loan was indicated suggest that most single women were lending within their own communities, spinsters with capital and few commitments can perhaps most accurately be characterized as the metaphorical “back pocket” of seventeenth century society. Moreover, two particular aspects of inheritance practice render this characterization increasingly probable. Firstly, testamentary evidence suggests that, in the event of the premature death of their fathers, most daughters gained access to their portion either on marriage or on reaching the age of majority (occasionally eighteen but more usually twenty-one), whichever occurred first. The lateness of the average age at first marriage - around twenty-six in the seventeenth century - and the fact that at least half of all young women may already have lost their fathers by that point in time may then have enabled a considerable number of women to gain access to their portion prior to the occasion of their marriage.¹⁶⁷ Secondly, cash as a commodity for female legatees may have assumed greater relative importance in probate settlements during the course of the seventeenth century. Not only has it been shown that testators in regions as varied as Yorkshire, Sussex and Lincolnshire regularly favoured daughters over sons with gifts of cash, but also that money legacies to girls (and also boys) over the course of the Tudor and Stuart periods were becoming steadily more common than any other type of bequest: by the

¹⁶⁵ Muldrew, *Economy*, 319; J. Blaxton, *The English usurer; or usury condemned by the most learned divines of the church of England* (1634), 11.

¹⁶⁶ Holderness, “Credit in English Rural Society”, 105.

¹⁶⁷ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.26, 255; Erickson, *Women*, 93. It is also possible that increasingly young women may have been granted access to their portion before their marriage. Christine Peters has identified a trend in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries towards giving portions to daughters at specified ages rather than on the occasion of their marriage. C. Peters, “Gender, Sacrament and Ritual: the Making and Meaning of Marriage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England”, *Past and Present*, 169 (2000): 89-91. In addition transmission of property was

mid-seventeenth century gifts to godchildren, grandchildren, and other kin were predominantly in the form of ready cash.¹⁶⁸

The discovery of a relationship between lending and celibacy allows for the possibility of a new approach to the understanding of falling marriage rates in the early seventeenth century. While the expansion in money-lending clearly reflects female opportunities in the labour market, and highlights the different accumulation strategies of men and women, it also requires that the concept of economic autonomy be incorporated into the theory of marriage behaviour in the seventeenth century: because the occasion of marriage, in common law, transferred all property of the bride to her husband, money-lending and marriage for women at least, appear to have been largely incompatible.¹⁶⁹ At the same time investment opportunities for women with a measure of liquid capital were steadily increasing. The secularisation of the lending process, in which the taking of interest was irrevocably divorced from theological control, had finally culminated in the introduction of the Jacobean usury statute of 1624. Notwithstanding the fact that a number of moralists continued to condemn the practice of usury, lending - increasingly defined solely in terms of its economic necessity - appears to have constituted a progressively more acceptable and necessary part of early modern life.¹⁷⁰

Moreover, the fall in the legal rate of interest from ten to eight per cent which accompanied the Jacobean usury legislation and the deepening economic recession of the 1620s would have manifested themselves most visibly in terms of increased levels of demand for credit facilities. In this context of heightened demand, at the very least the idea of financial independence sits comfortably alongside existing theories of developing autonomy and freedom of choice in providing an explanation for the shifts

often a gradual process with pre-mortem gifts and settlements being frequent rather than unusual. See O'Hara, *Courtship*, 167.

¹⁶⁸ Erickson, *Women*, 81, 85.

¹⁶⁹ Amy Erickson has highlighted the fact that under equity law married women could make legal provision to retain the right to their own property, including outstanding debts. A.L. Erickson, "Common Law Versus Common Practice: The Use of Marriage Settlements in Early Modern England", *Economic History Review*, 43 (1990): 21-36. However, she notes that arrangements for "separate estate" were more common in settlements negotiated on the occasion of a second marriage, when the bride was "older, perhaps wealthier, and wiser at least in the ways of legal *couverture*" than had previously been the case: *idem*, *Women*, 123. In Claire Cross's admittedly small sample of married women's wills, again the majority - four out of the six who made wills - had been married before. C. Cross, "Northern Women in the Early Modern Period: The Female Testators of Hull and Leeds 1520-1650", *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 59 (1987): 86.

¹⁷⁰ N. Jones, *God and the Moneylenders. Usury and Law in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1989), 197-8. Prejudicial attitudes towards Jewish moneylenders linger through the nineteenth century in English literature. I am grateful to Dorothea Kehler for drawing this to my attention.

in marriage strategies. Some women may have visualised lending merely as a means of achieving greater control over their choice of life-partner or the timing of their wedding; others may have conceived of their lending (or alternately it may have been socially constructed) as much in terms of social benefit as individual gain - as late as mid-century, Alice Wandesford visualised her putative role as moneylender, a function in her own estimation of her not inconsiderable fortune, in charitable rather than profitable terms.¹⁷¹ For others still, the decision to lend may have represented a conscious desire to avoid marriage, for lending activity was not bounded solely by duty and obligation. Marriage might well raise the total amount of resources available to a woman at the outset, but in the longer run, and especially in times of economic recession, increasing numbers of children posited a potentially dangerous strain on resources, which themselves were being contemporaneously undermined by the inability of the mother to work. While it may have been the case that husbands were expected to provide the bulk of the finance needed for the support of the household, it was the wives who were responsible for the process of day-to-day management; it is therefore not surprising to discover that four per cent of the women who sought relief from the astrologer and physician Richard Napier during the early seventeenth century claimed to have suffered mental illness as a result of financial problems within their respective marriages, while none of the men reported similar difficulties.¹⁷² Under such circumstances even a labourer's daughter with access to a small amount of capital may have questioned the long-term benefit of marriage as a stratagem. As Alice Clark succinctly indicated, "The full misery of the labourer's lot was only felt by the women".¹⁷³

In any event, while the decision to lend may not have militated against the idea of marriage *per se*, regardless of the manner in which women visualised their lending activity, the very nature of that activity and their high levels of involvement may have functioned to compromise both their present and future marital opportunities. The financial rewards of lending were inclined to be greatest while

¹⁷¹ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 75.

¹⁷² MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 241. Most of Napier's clients were of low or middling rank. *Ibid.*, 48-54, 104.

¹⁷³ A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1919), 86. G.N. Gandy has shown that an increasing number of women chose to remain celibate in the nineteenth century, suggesting this may have been occasioned by deteriorating economic conditions within the community. Cited in B. Hill. "The Marriage Age of Women and the Demographers", *History Workshop Journal*, 28 (1989): 133.

women remained single, and marriage was unlikely to be a realistic consideration until the debt had been recouped. Indeed, problems of this nature may have refocused the priorities of a number of single women in the wake of the 1620s: the pronounced shift towards formal lending visible in the lending patterns of both the Lincolnshire and Cheshire women in the 1630s suggests a more businesslike attitude to debt management, although the extent to which this was determined by marital considerations remains unclear. In addition, the use of formal instruments of debt did not in itself guarantee repayment. Judith Sweete of Grimoldby in Lincolnshire, for example, was owed a total of £9 2s. in 1617, the two bonds in question being two and three years overdue.¹⁷⁴ Even so, formal lending among single women and the proportion of women who never married underwent a synchronous rise in the seventeenth century, until both reached a peak during the 1660s. Since interest rates had fallen again in the previous decade to six per cent, and inflationary pressures were levelling out, the impetus to lend during this period can perhaps be more feasibly interpreted in terms of supply rather than demand: the proportion of female inventories referencing the existence of formal lending reached record proportions in the 1660s, precisely at the time when Roger Schofield's birth cohort of 1641- the cohort most likely never to marry - were at the peak of their marriageability.¹⁷⁵ Given the cumulative effects of emigration, disease, war and structural shifts in employment opportunities, decisions to remain celibate may have been superfluous. The more likely scenario at this particular juncture could well have been one of enforced rather than elected female celibacy, financed and supported by lending activity.

Although the proportions of single women involved in formal lending did fall back in Lincolnshire and Cheshire after the 1660s (as the marriage rate began to recover), single women remained considerably more conspicuous within the ranks of formal lenders towards the end of the century than had been the case at the beginning. Economic difficulties may once again have been a key factor. A wet autumn in 1692 ushered in six years of bad harvest, and demographic data suggest that the numbers of marriages in this decade on a national basis fell back to an all-time fifty-year low.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ L.A.O. INV 119/570, 1617, Judith Sweete.

¹⁷⁵ Because of the dearth of probate material that has survived from the Interregnum, it is not possible to know whether lending was even higher in the 1650s when interest rates had fallen to six per cent. Wrigley and Schofield's initial calculations suggested the cohorts of 1646 and 1651 had demonstrated the highest rates of celibacy. See Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table 7.28, 260.

¹⁷⁶ R.B. Rose, "Eighteenth Century price Riots and Public Policy in England", *International Review of Social History*, 6 (1961): 281; Wrigley and Schofield, *Population History*, Table A2.3, 498.

By the final years of the century, however, the decision of women with capital to remain celibate can perhaps be more readily interpreted in relation to their desire to remain independent. Literature had provided evidence of a new confidence in the single life and in the ability to sustain it, and as opportunities for investment expanded dramatically - in the Bank of England, in government annuities and in merchant trading companies - single women with relatively large amounts of capital may have taken full advantage of their resources. As a result the later seventeenth century witnessed a massive increase in personal wealth among the inventories of formal female lenders, with a corresponding rise, as detailed earlier, in the mean amount lent.¹⁷⁷ Such women constituted an important minority of all stockholders, both in the Bank of England and elsewhere, and were especially important as subscribers to government annuities.¹⁷⁸ In addition they bought bonds in merchant trading companies, and were happy to engage in less conservative ventures offering potentially high rewards - Eleanor Leedome of Middlesex, in addition to an interest in an estate, held thirty-seven £1 tickets in the Million Lottery when she died in 1701.¹⁷⁹

V. Summary

Constructing a coherent and comprehensive theory of marriage behaviour in the seventeenth century is not only problematic, but to a large extent idiosyncratic, since the relative weight attributed to each variable represent the outcome of little more than informed guesswork. As John Gillis has suggested, marriages in the early modern period were “the product of a combination of circumstances that mystified the participants as much as they have mystified the historians who have tried to explain them.”¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless there is little doubt that economic difficulties bore down heavily on the marital opportunities of a number of individuals in the Tudor and early Stuart periods, a factor that accords well with the equilibrium model of demographic-

¹⁷⁷ The mean inventory (minus debts) among the Lincolnshire formal female lenders rose from £2 in the first decade of the seventeenth century to £36 in the last. Cheshire formal lenders witnessed a rise from £7 to £58 over the same period.

¹⁷⁸ P.G.M. Dickinson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit 1688-1756* (1967), 250-302. The work of Amy Froide on Southampton has revealed that a large percentage of those who lent money to the Corporation in the seventeenth century were single women. A.M. Froide, “Single Women, Work and Community in Southampton 1550-1750, Duke University Ph.D., 1996, 338.

¹⁷⁹ G.L. MS 19504/53/02, 1701, Eleanor Leedome. The Million Act of 1693, for example, offered an annual interest rate of fourteen per cent, and the Lottery Act twelve per cent. See John Briscoe, *A Discourse on the Late Funds of the Million Act, Lottery Act and Bank of England* (1694), 12.

economic change offered by Wrigley and Schofield in 1981. Even though the inability to achieve the financial backing necessary for the establishment and maintenance of a new household may have been more likely to delay marriage decisions than render them impossible in the short term, in the long term a prolonged recession had the capability to impact permanently on marriage opportunities, particularly in relation to the realisation of a portion. Such pressures would have operated most effectively amongst the poorest sectors of society - future labourers were often better fed and housed as servants under another man's roof than they ever would be in their own households - but even among the middling groups of tradesmen and craftsmen the problems of supporting a family were far from negligible.

To the rational choice model offered by the proponents of homeostasis, however, must be added the model of institutional control. Local financing of poor relief gave those who contributed a direct pecuniary interest in maintaining a manageable demographic and economic balance, and Steve Hindle in particular, in calling for a reassessment of the political context of marriage, has challenged the potency of the homeostatic argument and requested that fuller notice be taken of the decisions of both individuals and social groups within local communities.¹⁸¹ In addition, economic problems were exacerbated by a variety of external constraints. Though the equilibrium model offered by Wrigley and Schofield focuses heavily on the relationship between movements in the real wage and proportions ever married, clearly any shift in the sex ratio, of either a temporary or permanent nature, had the potential to adversely affect the incidence of marriage. Migratory patterns and shifting employment opportunities, often favouring one sex at the expense of another, have been documented at both regional and local levels; emigration was largely concentrated around indentured single men; and though the extent of premature death among young men as a result of the plague remains unclear, the mid-century conflict was to prove disastrous for a generation of single women reaching maturity in its wake - latest estimates suggest that females born in the year 1641 were more likely than any others in the seventeenth century to retain their celibate status.

Yet in the final analysis, the desire to remain single may also have contributed significantly towards rises in the levels of both male and female celibacy in

¹⁸⁰ J.R. Gillis, " 'A Triumph of Hope over Experience': Chance and Choice in the History of Marriage", *International Review of Social History*, 44 (1999), 49.

¹⁸¹ Hindle, "Pauper Marriage", 89.

seventeenth century England. Though the strength of the marital discourse has drawn attention away from the notion that a considerable number of early modern individuals would have preferred celibacy over marriage, and more especially if they were women, the choice to remain single was a feature of the seventeenth century literature, and the rising profile of female celibacy combined with the ability of women with capital to be self-supporting requires that historians incorporate the concept of female choice into discussions of marriage behaviour. The extent to which women initiated loan agreements in anticipation of marriage or in lieu of it remains unclear, and the role of familial pressure may not have been insignificant, but the prospect of a regular income from lending, and in some cases the problem of default, may have militated significantly in favour of celibacy, especially in situations of acute economic hardship.

Inflated levels of celibacy in seventeenth century England then appear as the product of a unique set of economic and social circumstances, arising out of a combination of financial pressures, imbalances in sex ratios and a denial of the protestant marriage ideal. The fact that these variables together were capable of delivering rising levels of celibacy within a social context in which marriage enjoyed near-universal significance is not surprising; the marriage discourse, which stressed at length the importance of economic sufficiency and the suitability of the match, not only allowed individuals to delay entering into marriage agreements should a number of conditions not be satisfactory, but even functioned to prevent unsuitable marriages, through the medium of local parish officials and other social institutions, should this have been deemed appropriate. And while extended periods of celibacy among women with capital do not at first sit comfortably with the parameters of the marriage discourse, lending could operate to legitimate their single status in the eyes of the community, for spinsters with capital were a key source of local credit, and their lending activities crucial to the operation of the local economy. More importantly in terms of the discourse, however, was the fact that much of the credit was offered on a temporary basis: the involvement of women in money-lending activities did not seriously challenge the existing construction of marriage in the longer term as ultimately inevitable. This was to become more problematic in the later seventeenth century as the profile of celibacy for women scaled new heights, and the number of unmarried women in the general population had reached its maximum, but for the bulk of the earlier part of the century when marriage rates were in decline, there was

little serious conflict between the operation of the marital discourse, money-lending and a rise in celibacy. Indeed the ability of single women with capital to offer credit may yet prove to be a key variable in the search for the roots of falling marriage rates. For regardless of the motivation involved in the impetus to lend, the strength of the link between female celibacy and credit in the seventeenth century requires that lending by single women be viewed as a major destabilising influence in the demographic history of this particular chronological period.

Chapter Four

Celibacy and sexuality

From fornication and all other deadly sins, from the world the flesh and the devil: Good Lord deliver us.¹

It is no wonder why States, by encouraging Marriage and hindering Licentiousness, advance their own Interest, as well as preserve the Laws of God from contempt and violation.²

Virginity once lost, what remaineth safe and praiseworthy in a maid.³

Sexual desire as part of the human condition appeared in the contemporary imagination, as it does in the modern, as a powerful and motivating force. Under the influence of humanist scholarship, however, such desire gained in acceptance as new interpretations of religious texts revealed sexual intercourse as a natural facet of human activity, and one that had been introduced by God for the purpose of procreation. That there were still restrictions on its practice remained clear. As the physician Levinus Lemnius explained in his text *The Secret Miracles of Nature*, “Since this passion is so forcible and so unruly it can hardly be subdued (and but a few can bridle their passions) God granted unto man the use of the matrimonial bed, that he might be bounded thereby, and not defile themselves [*sic*] with wandering lust, who want the gift of Continency”.⁴ A key aspect of the marital discourse was then its capacity to raise the value of the act of sexual intercourse, while simultaneously functioning to restrict participation in it to within the boundaries of the marital estate. In this, it appears to have enjoyed a high degree of success - though marriage rates suffered a steady decline from the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth, there is little evidence of a comparable rise in illegitimacy. Bastardy figures did demonstrate some upward movement in the later part of Elizabeth’s reign, but this rise was not sustained, and after peaking early in the 1600s, numbers fell

¹ “The Litany” in Clay, ed., *Liturgies*, 11.

² Graunt, *Natural*, 377-8.

³ T. Becon, *Catechism* (1564), in Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman*, 27.

away afterwards, sinking to their nadir in the 1650s.⁵ The statistical findings for the middle decades of the seventeenth century have been subject to intense academic scrutiny, for many parish registers indicate a decline in the registration of baptisms during this period.⁶ Nevertheless, given the fact that a low and relatively stable rate of illegitimacy prevailed in England during the remainder of the century, the dip in the proportion of illegitimate children in the 1650s is generally understood to form part of a national trend away from illicit sexual behaviour.

In the view of a considerable number of historians such a state of affairs could have been effected by only one possible circumstance - the increasing avoidance of sexual intercourse prior to the onset of marriage. Consequently Edward Shorter has argued that “before 1750 the lives of most young people were resolutely unerotic, and that traditional society succeeded quite effectively in suppressing ... the sex drives of the unmarried”.⁷ Lawrence Stone too has offered a picture of England in the seventeenth century as “sexually an extraordinarily restrained society”, and even Gerald Quaipe’s more erotically indulgent vision of the English peasantry in this period, while denying the need for single men to exercise “extraordinary self control”, has found it difficult to escape the conclusion that single women rarely engaged in pre-marital intercourse outside the context of marriage.⁸ Discussion has therefore tended to focus around the relative capacity of a number of contemporary factors - the most notable of which remain religion and economics - to elicit such high levels of restraint.

This, however, is not the whole of the story, for what has been neglected in the current historiography is the sexual history of the early modern celibate *in toto*. In seeking to conceptualise the period of time spent outside marriage as one largely devoid of sexual activity, historians appear largely unanimous in their desire to consign the majority of early modern singles to a life without the thrill of sexual fulfilment. Yet there is no reason to suspect that this was in fact the case. While the discourse of marriage proved extremely effective in prohibiting access to procreative

⁴ Lemnius, *Secret Miracles*, 9.

⁵ Adair, *Courtship*, 49.

⁶ This is particularly noticeable in parishes of the north west, such as Bolton and Rochdale. See K. Wrightson, “The nadir of English illegitimacy in the seventeenth century”, in Laslett et al., *Bastardy*, 184-5. Conversely, the institutional chaos of the 1650s may have resulted in the revival of verbal contracts as couples disliking the new civil marriage system chose to avoid it.

⁷ E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (1976), 99.

⁸ L. Stone, *Uncertain Unions. Marriage in England 1660-1753* (1992), 10; Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches*, 247.

intercourse outside the marriage context, it may have been less concerned to prevent engagement in alternative sexual activities that would not lead to conception. Nevertheless, current interpretations proceed on the basis that penetrative vaginal intercourse constituted the ultimate goal of all sexual encounters. Shorter, for example, characterised sexual motivation as that “dark motor of human biology moving men and women to intercourse in all times and all places”,⁹ and other male narratives too - while recognising a number of alternative ways in which sexual satisfaction could have been achieved - continue to assert by implication that heterosexual intercourse was the sum total of all sexual experience. Such understandings have arisen in part as a result of historians’ engagement with contemporary discourse and in part the influence of modern understandings of sexuality, both of which offer primacy to the act of intercourse. Presuming to limit sexual satisfaction within the parameters of a heterosexual, phallogentric and - in the context of early modern England - marital framework, however, has potentially disastrous consequences for an understanding of the relationship between celibacy and sexuality.

The essence of this chapter is then to examine the nature of sexual activity among single people in its widest possible sense in seventeenth century England, in order to examine not only the strength of the marital discourse in deterring extra-marital intercourse, but also to consider the alternative options that were available to celibates during this period. Recent work on the history of sexuality has allowed researchers to move beyond the constraints of biological predetermination and reveal sexual desire not as a physical constant, but rather as a cultural entity whose features are mutable and protean in character. By drawing on medical understandings of the body and the nature of sexuality, in addition to more specific documentary sources, it may now be possible to offer a new point of entry into the sex lives of past generations, and in the process reveal a number of other opportunities for sexual fulfilment outside the phallogentric marital paradigm.

I. Celibacy and procreative intercourse

The most persuasive discourse on the subject of sexuality in the early modern period, as indicated in Chapter Two, was that of religion. In the Middle Ages the

⁹ E. Shorter, “Illegitimacy, Sexual Revolution and Social Change in Modern Europe”, *Journal of*

church had viewed all sexual activity with hostility and suspicion, but as Protestantism began to remould the moral order of Western Europe, Luther and Calvin in particular were instrumental in offering a new vision of sexual morality based around the institution of marriage.¹⁰ The juxtaposition of sexual desire and spiritual salvation remained problematic even after the Reformation - private prayers published during the reign of Elizabeth invited individuals to elicit God's help in remaining continent - but in sanctifying sexual intercourse within the context of holy matrimony, the so called "canonisation" of western sexuality, Protestant thought had begun to undermine the medieval notion that all sexual activity was iniquitous.¹¹ However, as intercourse between a man and his wife gained progressive recognition, the act of fornication - usually defined as intercourse between a man and a single woman - was designated unlawful and subject to the censure of the ecclesiastical courts.¹² Moreover, the new focus on the necessity for solemnisation before consummation, the insistence that "married folkes go to the chyrch afore they lye togyther" had as its necessary corollary the increased vilification and punishment of any sexual activity outside marriage.¹³ By the late sixteenth century the boundaries of ecclesiastical doctrine had been clearly delineated. Marriage therefore entered the contemporary imagination as an essential antidote to whoredom, and the sinfulness of sex outside marriage was contrasted with the virtuousness of that within it: the "mutual copulation of those that be thus joined together in the Godly state of blessed matrimony" was not merely acceptable to ecclesiastical teaching, but "pure virginitie and allowable before God and man".¹⁴

The tenor of cultural opinion on the significance of pre-marital chastity is clearly visible in the contemporary sources that sought to protect a pubescent and passionate youth from the dangers inherent in succumbing prematurely to their baser instincts. Much of the advice, however, was directed specifically towards the single young female. The concept of virginity formed the centrepiece of the standard

Interdisciplinary History, 2 (1971-2), 242.

¹⁰ N. Roberts, *Whores in History. Prostitution in Western Society* (1993), 111.

¹¹ W.K. Clay, ed., *Private Prayers Put Forth By Authority During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, Parker Society, 43 (1851): 104. Sex within marriage became "canonised" by Protestant theologians who envisaged it as the means to satisfy bodily desire without succumbing to the dangers of excessive lust. A. Haynes, *Sex and Marriage in Elizabethan England* (1997), 4. William Whately, for example, suggested that "to sanctify the marriage bed and use it reverently, with prayer and thanksgiving, will make it moderate". Whately, *Bride Bush*, 43-4.

¹² Griffith, *Bethel*, 240.

¹³ Bullinger, *Christen state*, fol. xlvii.

package of desirable female attributes throughout the Tudor and Stuart period, and became the quality around which the later seventeenth century ideal of the single woman was constructed.¹⁵ Advice from puritan ministers like William Gouge, therefore, was suitably prescriptive. In taking the bible as both the source of, and the legitimation for, his argument, Gouge took pains to remind his readers of the fact that “the law stileth her that is contracted a maid, to show that she ought to keepe her selfe a virgin till the mariage be consummate.”¹⁶ Such counsel received support and reinforcement from the numerous moral warnings against untimely surrenders of virginity to be found in popular literature. Thomas Carew’s ballad *Good Counsel to a Young Maid*, for example, cautioned a young girl to consider her honour before relinquishing her chastity:

Netts, of passions finest thred,
Snaring Poems, will be spred,
All, to catch thy maiden-head.

Then beware, for those that cure
Loves disease, themselves endure
For reward, a Calenture.

Rather let the Lover pine,
Then his pale cheeke, should assigne
A perpetuall blush to thine.¹⁷

Yet while advice on the maintenance of virtue may have been gender-related, it was certainly not gender-specific. Matthew Griffith’s exhortation to “fly the lusts of youth” extended across the gender divide, and male exemplars of pre-marital chastity were also a feature of the ballad literature.¹⁸ Thus the young male narrator in the early seventeenth century song *The Batchelor’s Delight* made a clear connection between celibacy and a chaste existence:

¹⁴ P. Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), 96-104.

¹⁵ See especially Barker, “Virgin”, 360-1.

¹⁶ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 202.

¹⁷ R.S. Sylvester, ed., *The Anchor Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse, Volume 2* (New York, 1969), 353.

And therefore I will single live
In spite of lust and passion
Pure Virgins good examples give
And worth our imitation.¹⁹

Despite the moral pressure to locate sexual activity within the bounds of solemnised marriage, however, a wide range of contemporary evidence leaves historians in no doubt that the reality for both sexes fell something short of the ideal. The memoirs of John Cannon, for example, reveal his sexual involvement as a young excise officer with Anne Heister, a servant at the inn where he lodged, and according to the diary of Simon Forman, his apprentice John Braddedge had “begun to be bawdy and lie with wenches at sixteen”.²⁰ Other records confirm the fact that celibacy was not necessarily synonymous with chastity. Thus Gervase Disney, who discovered by chance that an ale-house he had visited in the company of fellow apprentice John Mildmay in the 1660s was in reality a bawdy house, recorded returning to it on at least two further occasions during the remainder of his apprenticeship, encouraged by his friends who professed that this would “the better ... work in us an abhorrence and antipathy against the practices”.²¹ Moreover, the testimony of Thomas Wilson, presented in May of 1598 for fornication with a fellow servant, revealed a catalogue of sexual activity that ranged from kissing and “jesting” to full penetrative intercourse, involving him in sexual liaisons with a number of women, both single and married.²² Though the autobiographical writings of the aforementioned Forman offer a measure of support for the repressed youth hypothesis - he claimed not to have engaged in any act of coition until he reached the age of thirty - once initiated, the self-taught physician and professional astrologer abandoned all attempts at self-restraint. Anne Young, his first partner (who was also single) bore him an illegitimate child. He had regular intercourse with Mrs. Julian Clark and Anne

¹⁸ Griffith, *Bethel*, 141.

¹⁹ Anon., *The Batchelor's Delight* (1622).

²⁰ T. Hitchcock, “Sociability and Misogyny in the Life of John Cannon, 1684-1743”, in T. Hitchcock and M. Cohen, eds., *English Masculinities 1660-1800* (1999), 40; A.L. Rowse, *Simon Forman. Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age* (1974), 52.

²¹ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 201.

²² P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640* (1996), 235.

Griffiths defines “jesting” as a nebulous term for a broad range of behaviour from joking and flirting to heavy petting, which implied fun and casual opportunity.

Nurse, whose status is unknown, and his relationship with Mrs. Condwell continued after his marriage in 1599, when he also had intercourse with his maidservant, Frances Hill, and another single girl Bess Parker, who subsequently became pregnant.²³ Reading against the grain, it is therefore tempting to interpret contemporary exhortations to chastity as *prima facie* evidence of its absence. Yet not all young men were so inclined. The exploits of Cannon and Forman contrast markedly with the considerable restraint displayed by the young Quaker, William Stout, who gamely resisted the sexual offers of his widowed neighbour, even though he claimed that she “took all oportunitys in conversation and other insinuations to allure me to her bed, or to introduce her selfe into myne.”²⁴

The pre-marital sexual activities of early modern women have proved much more difficult to establish, for unlike their male counterparts, female diarists appear to have been far too inhibited to set either their current or previous sexual encounters down on paper. The fact that they appear as players in male narratives is indicative of a minimum level of involvement in pre-marital sexual intercourse, but women’s attitudes towards fornication have, for the most part, been extracted from their numerous presentations for such activity that appear in contemporary court records. Cases of female participation in ante-nuptial coition can usually be classified under one of three headings: a casual encounter which may or may not have been elicited (rape or promiscuity); an illicit relationship of inequality, usually with a head of household; an illicit relationship of equality in which marriage had most often been signalled.²⁵ In the first case, there is considerable evidence, in the documentation of the early modern period as a whole, of exploitative sex and predatory male behaviour directed towards women.²⁶ In popular medical guides and conduct books, the female body was often discussed in terms of its “use” value to men, and euphemisms for sexual organs and penetration reveal intercourse not only as an act of male dominance, but also of male violence: the core values of early modern popular culture

²³ Rowse, *Simon Forman*, 78-82.

²⁴ Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 103. Stout claimed to have been twenty-six at the time and indicated that the widow was thirty.

²⁵ This useful typology was created by Cissie Fairchilds in her discussion of early eighteenth century France, but appears to apply equally well to England in the seventeenth century. C. Fairchilds, “Female Sexual Attitudes and the Rise of Illegitimacy: A Case Study”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 8 (1978): 627-67.

²⁶ Reay, *Popular Cultures*, 18.

appear to have been “profoundly misogynistic”.²⁷ The general belief that women were willing partners in the act of sexual intercourse militated against the notion that any woman would harbour antipathy towards it, thus ensuring that rape - though it was occasionally prosecuted - did not feature routinely in the records of the early modern judiciary. And where it did, the outcome, in terms of the victim at least was unlikely to be favourable.²⁸ In the case of Anne Wright versus John Clough, for example, Anne claimed John had vowed,

that if she would assent that he might have the use of her body he would marry her without any further delay, which she utterly denied and refused, yet this answered nothing at all contenting him but finding opportunity and your suppliant’s parent absent ... [he] did, volens nolens ravish her much against her will, in so much as it pleased God that she conceived with child.²⁹

In this particular instance, the fact of Anne’s subsequent conception served only to render a conviction for rape the more improbable, for without the testimony of witnesses, events of this nature would have been interpreted as little more than *post facto* attempts to mitigate the effects of an unplanned pregnancy: since popular medical opinion understood female orgasm to comprise a necessary part of the conception process, the very fact that pregnancy ensued was tantamount to a confession of enjoyment.³⁰ Other examples, however, do reflect a more dangerous world of interpersonal violence. Thus Elianor Stambridge was violently assaulted by John Stockton in 1649, who threw her to the ground intending to “abuse her body”. Her strong resistance may have prevented her loss of honour, but almost cost her her life: Stockton, infuriated by his inability to satiate his passion, held Elianor down “in a pit of water”, and was only prevented from her murder by the chance passing of a neighbouring maid on her way to milk the cows.³¹

²⁷ S.D. Amussen, “The Gendering of Popular Culture in Early Modern England”, in T. Harris, ed., *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (1995), 50.

²⁸ Very few women attempted to prosecute for rape and conviction was unlikely unless the victim was under eighteen. See Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 48.

²⁹ J.H.E. Bennett and J.C. Dewhurst, eds., *Chester Quarter Sessions Records 1559-1760*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 94 (1940): 67.

³⁰ As Dalton explained in his handbook to country justices first published in 1618, “If a woman at the time of the supposed Rape do conceive with child by the Ravisher, this is no Rape, for a woman cannot conceive with child, except she doe consent”. See Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 47-8.

³¹ Bennett and Dewhurst, eds., *Quarter Sessions*, 135.

Sex was also available in the form of a commodity, and there are a number of examples of casual exploitative encounters in court depositions and examinations. In Chester in 1616, for example, Richard Davies had apparently seduced Ann Lloyd with the offer of food. “Show me thy privities and I will give thee some bread and cheese” he was said to have told her, and her subsequent pregnancy, witnesses claimed, was the end result of this unfortunate pact.³² The utilisation of sexuality as an informal way of securing goods or male sanction may have been a relatively commonplace aspect of female behaviour. Samuel Pepys, for instance, is known to have secured navy contracts for the husbands of his mistresses in return for the receipt of sexual favours, and there is no reason to suspect that sexual bargaining was an unusual or minority activity among single women, especially at the lower end of the social ladder.³³

Prostitution itself was a recognised feature of Tudor and Stuart England. In urban areas, and in London in particular, organised prostitution was an old and established activity. Southwark, just south of the City, was notorious in the sixteenth century for its “stews” (brothels), and though there were considerable efforts made at cleaning up the capital, the alehouses of suburban London in the early seventeenth century retained their scandalous reputation for prostitution.³⁴ In the more permissive atmosphere of the Restoration, it was even possible to obtain printed details of the full extent of prostitution in the capital: *The Wandering Whore* (1669), ostensibly a conversation between a young whore and an old bawd, listed what appears to have been a comprehensive account of brothels and of streets noted for vice in later seventeenth century London.³⁵

Neither was prostitution restricted to city life. In Wigan in 1617 Elizabeth Barker alias Orminshaw was described in court as “a common companion and company keeper for severall persons both married and unmarried to spend their means in Alehouses”, and the availability of casual semi-amateur prostitution in rural villages, in the view of Lawrence Stone, ensured that “sex was ... rather more readily

³² J. Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (1989), 144-5. Addy also offers one example in which the female was the protagonist: in Nantwich in 1631 Alice Cowper was cited for offering Thomas Marchant 5s. to be “naughty” with her. *Ibid.*, 137.

³³ Stone, *Family*, 345; J.G. Turner, “Pepys and the private parts of monarchy”, in G. Maclean, ed., *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration. Literature, Drama, History* (1995), 107.

³⁴ Laurence, *Women*, 72-3.

³⁵ A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel. Woman's lot in seventeenth-century England* (1984), 468.

available to rural bachelor youths” than might otherwise have been suspected.³⁶ Because of the opportunistic nature of prostitution in the countryside, records of formal prosecutions rarely appear in the documentation of the church courts, but Gerald Quaife offered a typology of such activity in Somerset that involved private, public, urban and village whores - both permanent and opportunist in nature - in addition to a catalogue of wives, widows and “experienced” spinsters who entertained their lovers on a regular basis.³⁷

While illicit sexual intercourse appears in the guise of an extra-mural activity that single women may or may not have sanctioned, illicit sexual relationships could also be a feature of the household system. Single male householders, under less restraint than their married counterparts, may have used their position and status more forcefully to extort sexual favours from their servants, but married employers too were not averse to attempting the chastity of their female employees.³⁸ Some encounters appear to have been tantamount to rape - one servant had her sleeve torn off by her master in a particularly rough confrontation, and another discovered later by chance that her master had taken advantage of her during one of her epileptic fits - for masters like Robert Parker, who believed in their right to the sexual favours of their servants, made full use of their positions of power.³⁹ Parker, a London cook, who was accused in 1605 of committing fornication with his maid Alice Ashemore, claimed in his defence that it was his privilege as her master to have the use of her body: “thowe art my servant and I may doe with thee what I please”.⁴⁰ Not all servants were prepared to tolerate their masters advances, with some taking the steps necessary to preserve their honour from unsolicited attack. Elizabeth Taverner and

³⁶ Addy, *Sin*, 109; Stone, *Family*, 391.

³⁷ Laurence, *Women*, 72; Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 146-56.

³⁸ Mistresses too, could be demanding of their servants. One young man recalled in his cautionary autobiography, that he had been forced to abandon a position in service on account of the fact that “he could not possibly satisfy the expectation of his Benefactress (who certainly had more than an ordinary respect for him)”. See C. Croke, *Fortune’s uncertainty or Youths unconstancy* (1667), 52. See also T. Meldrum, “London Domestic Servants from Depositional Evidence, 1660-1750: Servant-Employer Sexuality in the Patriarchal Household”, in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, (hereafter Hitchcock et al.), eds., *Chronicling Poverty. The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (1997), 57-60. Pederasty may also not have been uncommon: Francis Bacon reputedly had sexual relationships with his male servants. See G. Hammill, “The Epistemology of Expurgation: Bacon and the Masculine Birth of Time”, in J. Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (1994), 244.

³⁹ Meldrum, “London”, 56. Evidence of exploitation is available at a number of social levels. John Verney, for example, wrote to his brother Edmund that though their father’s maid had married, she would be “good game for John Stewkeley next time he visits Claydon”. See Whyman, *Sociability*, 113.

⁴⁰ Griffiths, *Youth*, 274-5.

Elizabeth Wilcox, for example, who had both complained vociferously when their master Mr. Vesey made repeated attempts on their chastity, eventually decided to leave their positions when his activities could or would not be curtailed.⁴¹ However, the records of the courts offer details in addition of a considerable number of others, such as Robert Hooke's maid, Nell, who proved considerably more obliging - Hooke's diary reveals that she slept with him three times a month in the 1670s for no extra money.⁴² Reasons for such apparent acquiescence were likely to have been varied in nature. While a number succumbed out of desire and attraction, others appear to have submitted on the promise of marriage to their master after the death of their mistress, while others still were driven by more mercenary motivations.⁴³ Thus when Robert Ayton of West Harrington was brought before the court accused of impregnating Alice Lax, one of his servants, it was clear to witnesses involved in the case that it had been worth her while to surrender. As John Lax, her cousin, noted at Ayton's trial, Alice "had not gotten all her fyne cloathes and laced aprons for nothing".⁴⁴

Though it is easy to appreciate how vulnerable a number of women would have been to economic appeals and threats, not all single women were innocent victims. The keynote of these relationships of inequality should remain one of male exploitation - seduction could be accompanied by considerable harassment and violence - but some servants undoubtedly entered relationships with their masters voluntarily, even employing a measure of calculation.⁴⁵ Michael Roberts has suggested that a number of migrant women engaged in "quasi-uxorial" arrangements with their single male employers, and many others may have entered into unequal sexual relationships in order to further their social or economic position. Intimacy with an employer may have constituted a high-risk strategy to acquire economic security, but for a number of women with limited alternatives, it may have offered a singular opportunity for personal improvement.⁴⁶ It should also not be forgotten that

⁴¹ Meldrum, "London", 55.

⁴² Fraser, *Weaker Vessel*, 169.

⁴³ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 61.

⁴⁴ W.H.D. Longstaffe, ed., *The Acts of the High Commission Court within the Diocese of Durham*, Surtees Society, 34 (1858): 43.

⁴⁵ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 266-8.

⁴⁶ M. Roberts, "Women and Work in Sixteenth-century English Towns", in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene, eds., *Work in Towns 850-1850* (Leicester, 1990), 92-3.

a number of longstanding liaisons were probably based on mutual affection, for there are examples of men who married their mistresses after the death of their wives.⁴⁷

Despite evidence of considerable amounts of predatory male behaviour both within the household and without, the greatest proportion of single women who entered into sexual activity prior to church solemnisation claimed to have done so with partners of more or less equal status on the basis of a promise of marriage.⁴⁸ This is hardly surprising, since evidence for the toleration of fornication in the context of an expected marriage in the Tudor and Stuart periods is considerable. Keith Wrightson, for example, has suggested that “restraints upon sexual activity imposed by the realities of a pre-contraceptive age in which sexual activity led almost inevitably to conception, crumbled once marriage was in sight.”⁴⁹ Richard Adair has gone even further, and argued that pre-marital cohabitation was acceptable to a large proportion of the early modern community; it was only a perceived reluctance to proceed towards the solemnisation of marriage that triggered concern.⁵⁰ The degree of indulgence exhibited certain regional and temporal differences, and attitudes were usually most intolerant amongst substantial property holders, but in spite of the proselytising of the professional moralists, the population at large appear to have been prepared to extend a visible amount of magnanimity towards couples engaging in pre-marital intercourse if marriage was understood to be forthcoming.⁵¹

Indeed the shared cultures of sex and marriage appear to have been “deeply etched in the social fabric”.⁵² In William Shakespeare’s play *Measure for Measure*, for example, Claudio confesses to a friend that

... upon a true contract

I got possession of Julietta’s bed.

You know the lady; she is fast my wife,

⁴⁷ Elliott, “Single Women”, 89. See also Adair, *Courtship*, 86.

⁴⁸ Quaife claimed that six out of every ten girls examined by Justices during the Interregnum about pre-marital fornication offered the promise of marriage as their defence. Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 59. See also his article entitled, “The Consenting Spinster in a Peasant Society: Aspects of Premarital Sex in “Puritan” Somerset 1645-1660”, *Journal of Social History*, 11 (1977): 235-7. Illegitimate children appear to have been conceived between couples of similar social status who intended to marry, but for some reason did not proceed to solemnisation. See Wrightson, *English Society*, 84.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁰ Cited in Griffiths, *Youth*, 265.

⁵¹ Richard Adair has uncovered considerable regional variation in levels of bridal pregnancy especially before 1650. Adair, *Courtship*, 107; Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 81.

⁵² Reay, *Popular Cultures*, 34.

Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order.⁵³

References of a similar nature manifest themselves in at least two other Shakespearean comedies, *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale*, and other genres reveal evidence of considerable cultural toleration of pre-marital intercourse once the decision to marry had been taken.⁵⁴ Thus the ballad of Susan the servant and William the apprentice, one of a number of the popular poems, songs and stories in the Pepys collection, offers evidence in support of the existence of popular permissiveness within the context of a forthcoming marriage:

So being night they went to bed,
not making any strife,
He did obtain her Maiden-head,
before she was his Wife
But afterwards they Married were,
as Lovers ought to do,
And now they live at hearts content,
and long may they do so.⁵⁵

Puritan ministers were also acutely aware of the practice of sealing the marriage agreement with the “carnall use of each other’s bodies”, and some continued to recognise the validity of such activity in terms of legitimating the marriage.⁵⁶ As Perkins revealed, “If the parties betrothed, do lie together before the condition (though honest and appertaining to marriage) be performed; then the contract for time to come is, without further controversie, sure and certaine”.⁵⁷ Yet the practise did not receive approval in all ecclesiastical quarters. Though Perkins appears to have moderately sympathetic in his outlook, William Gouge continued to reprove any couples that took the liberty to “know” each other after the contract but before the solemnisation:

⁵³ W. Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 1.2.141-5.

⁵⁴ Idem, *Twelfth Night*, 5.1.; idem, *The Winters Tale*, 4.3.

⁵⁵ Spufford, *Small Books*, 167.

⁵⁶ Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, 23.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“Many take libertie after a contract to know their spouse, as if they were married: an unwarrantable and dishonest practise.”⁵⁸

There were considerable difficulties in eradicating long held tenets on the timing of sexual intimacy. Though the church strove consistently to restrict legal marriage and therefore the onset of sexual intercourse to the final ecclesiastical solemnisation, the understanding and acceptance of intercourse prior to the legal church ceremony probably had at its root the ancient medieval custom of spousals, in which the promise of marriage, followed by intercourse, had served to seal the marriage contract. The custom of spousals underwent fairly rapid decline in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, under the increasingly regulatory influence of the church courts, but the idea of intercourse between betrothed couples appears to have enjoyed continuing acceptance. When Katherine Salter asserted in 1564 “that after a couple have talked of matrimony it is lawful for them to have carnal copulation”, she was merely summarizing a popular opinion that appears to have undergone little modification during the following century.⁵⁹

The extent to which couples agreed upon marriage and then commenced a sexual relationship, or allowed the relationship to proceed on the understanding that marriage would occur if pregnancy resulted (i.e., was sexual activity marriage- or courtship-led) has also been of interest to historians. While distinctions between the two remain problematic (even those involved may have misrepresented their intentions), single women brought before the authorities as a result of a pre-marital pregnancy commonly claimed that their situation stemmed from the onset of intercourse in response to a promise of marriage on which the male, for a variety of reasons, had subsequently reneged. Grace Burles of Terling, for example, laid the blame for her dishonourable status in 1602 squarely at the feet of the state; Edward Shipman, the reputed father of her child, had, she claimed, “mindeth shortlye to marye her”, but had been pressed into the army before the marriage could be solemnised. Alice Jackson, a servant in Worcestershire, however, portrayed herself more woefully as the victim of male deception. According to her deposition, she had “behaved herself very honestly” until 1617 when she received the attention of a fellow servant, who “did make great protestations of love ... promising by many great vows to marry her”. On hearing the news that Alice was pregnant, however, his

⁵⁸ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 202.

resolve had apparently disintegrated and he had quickly disappeared.⁶⁰ More unusual in the surviving documentation are the statements of women which suggest that pregnancy rather than marriage may have been the agreed nuptial trigger.

Accordingly, Elizabeth Heakin of Chester insisted that Thomas Williams had vowed that he would marry her “within a months warning after ... Elizabeth did geve the notice that she was with child”, while the more laconic Charles Nuttall had simply promised Dorothy, his apparent intended: “So soon as yo shall conceave with Childe I will make yo my lawfull wiefe”.⁶¹ Sexual favours then appear to have been easier for men to extract if preceded by an offer of marriage, but the willingness of some women to engage in sexual intercourse outside the boundaries of an immediate marital context required only that the men in question promise to do the honourable thing if conception were to ensue.

Clearly some relationships - even those predicated on the promise of a wedding - might not have had marriage as their *immediate* aim. Once virginity had been abandoned, under the cover of a marriage agreement, sexual intercourse may have occurred between the consenting couple on a regular basis until conception was confirmed. At the Easter sessions in Northampton in 1657, for example, Phoebe Hilliar claimed that John Lillington - the reputed father of her child - had first had “carnall knowledge of her boddy a bout Allhollentide [c. 1st November] in the yeare 1655” and moreover had “continued haveing the carnall knowledge of her boddy severall tymes and soe often that shee cannott remember the number of them”⁶² Allowing for the statistical probability of conception and spontaneous abortion, the period of regular intercourse prior to marriage solemnisation could have been as much as a year, or even longer.⁶³

Popular attitudes towards acceptable ante-nuptial intercourse as opposed to its more heinous illicit counterpart fornication, however, were more keenly differentiated by the expectation of marriage than any other factor. Ante-nuptial intercourse frequently became immoral only when it threatened economic or social stability,

⁵⁹ S. Amussen, *An Ordered Society. Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (1988), 110.

⁶⁰ Wrightson, *English Society*, 85.

⁶¹ Adair, *Courtship*, 108.

⁶² J. Wake, ed., *Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, 1630, 1657, 1657-8*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1 (1924): 118.

⁶³ R.M Smith, “Marriage Processes in the English Past: Some Continuities”, in L. Bonfield, R. Smith and K. Wrightson (hereafter Bonfield et al.), eds., *The World We Have Gained Histories of Population and Social Structure* (1986), 92.

usually through the arrival of an illegitimate child. Though pre-nuptial intercourse, in the view of Ingram was never wholly licit, the combination of relatively high levels of bridal pregnancy, and the fact that incontinence of this kind was rarely the subject of defamation cases in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tends to suggest a certain ambivalence towards sexual intercourse prior to solemnisation.⁶⁴ Moreover, in promoting a limited acceptance of ante-nuptial fornication defined by marital intention, populist views may have unwittingly served to foster a culture of seduction in which the promise of marriage became a common, and to some extent acceptable, male ploy to extract sexual favour. Its usefulness in reflecting the exact nature of the relationship between marriage agreements and sexual intercourse, however, is limited; while some women may have utilised the claim of a promise of marriage in court as a device to win sympathy, gain credibility and avoid excessive punishment, others may have agreed to intercourse, not because they had received any specific promise of marriage, but rather in the hope that they would.⁶⁵

Furthermore, not all sexual relationships would have been undertaken with the idea of marriage in mind. A number of masters like Richard Blubeane of Salisbury who tried to have sex with his servant maid Frances Sotwell in 1582 in his wife's absence, may have attempted to extract sexual favours on a on-off basis, while other men took advantage of sexual opportunities as and when they presented themselves: in 1619 Richard Foster confessed to ante-nuptial intercourse with Anne Slie "to whom he remembreth not that he hath spoken two words before but thinketh that he had some time danced before in her company".⁶⁶ There may also have been, as Laslett has suggested, a bastardy prone sub-group, in which illegitimacy emerged routinely and in successive generations.⁶⁷ Dr. Favour, vicar of Halifax in the early seventeenth century, identified four generations of bastard bearers in the parish registers and labelled them as such, and in Somerset over a third of illegitimate children born between 1601 and 1660 were born into bastardy-prone families.⁶⁸ In addition, long-term consensual unions where no marriage was evident appear regularly in the

⁶⁴ M. Ingram "The Reform of Popular Culture? Sex and Marriage in Early Modern England", in B. Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England* (1985), 147. The fact that around a quarter of all brides in the later sixteenth century, and an incredible sixty per cent of brides in early seventeenth century Lamplugh in Cumberland were pregnant, however, has encouraged Adair to suggest that it is "absurd to categorise bridal pregnancy as aberrant sexual behaviour". Adair, *Courtship*, 92, 100.

⁶⁵ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 62.

⁶⁶ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 265-6.

⁶⁷ P. Laslett, "The bastardy prone sub-society" in Laslett et al., eds., *Bastardy*, 217-46.

⁶⁸ Addy, *Sin*, 116; Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 156.

documentary evidence. Elizabeth Smith and Henry Roe, according to the charge made against her 1638, had “theis ten yeares last past com[m]itted the detestable sinne of ... fornicacon” resulting in the birth of at least one illegitimate child, while Lydia Downes spent four years as mistress and companion to Richard Skeete, conceiving five times in the process.⁶⁹ Unmarried or dubiously joined couples were not uncommon among itinerant travellers - around a third of couples examined in Wiltshire between 1603 and 1638 and in Leicester between 1584 and 1640 proved to be uncertainly wed - and in a single visitation of the bishop in the Archdeaconry of Norwich, Sudbury and Suffolk in 1629 as many as sixty-eight couples were presented for cohabitation.⁷⁰

II. Problems of measurement

The full extent of illicit intercourse in the early modern period remains highly controversial. Since levels of fornication are usually retrieved by recourse to levels of illegitimacy, the task of analysing sexual activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is compromised by an imperfect understanding of three critical areas of contemporary practice which impacted upon it: contraception, abortion and infanticide. In considering first the role of contraception, it is clear that deliberate attempts to inhibit fertility were denounced by the religious and medical establishments. Thomas Hilder, for example, remonstrated sharply with “divers who are married, that use all meanes possible to prevent great encrease of children”, claiming they had a “diabolical spirit”, for God “never makes mouths but he provides meat”.⁷¹ Medical texts too, in advising readers on optimum conditions for procreation in terms of amount of passion and most favourable position, created a norm of sexual activity in which pleasure was permitted only in pursuit of procreation.⁷² Though physicians and moralists understood that procreation was not the sole stimulus to sexual activity, in the increasingly pro-natalist atmosphere of the seventeenth century it was the promotion rather than the prevention of fertility that gained social approval.

⁶⁹ Adair, *Courtship*, 178; D. Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000), 80.

⁷⁰ A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men. The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (1985), 65; Griffiths, *Youth*, 265.

⁷¹ Hilder, *Conjugal Counsell*, 18, 20.

⁷² S.F.M. Grieco, “The Body, Appearance and Sexuality”, in N. Zemon Davis and A. Farge, eds., *A History of Women in the West. III. Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (1993), 70. Culpeper denounced those who used “apish wayes and manners of copulation” to avoid pregnancy. Culpeper, *Directory*, 97.

Yet despite the prescriptive advice, evidence relating to the existence of contraceptive practices within marriage is not difficult to find. Indeed, recently identified shifts in marital fertility between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have caused a number of demographic historians to consider the use of a variety of such practices within marriage, most significantly those of lactation and withdrawal. Unfortunately, there is little contemporary discussion of the contraceptive role of lactation - knowledge regarding the preventative aspects of breast feeding may have been transmitted via a female subculture organised largely around the experience of childbirth - but recourse to withdrawal (or the practice of *coitus interruptus*), which had been roundly condemned by a procession of Tudor ministers, continued to attract criticism in the Stuart period.⁷³ Evidence of the use of withdrawal among the population at large remains fragmentary, but knowledge of its properties was clearly not restricted to the educated elite. One particularly frustrated wife, for example, claimed that her husband “did not deal with her in bed as befitted a married man”, for “what seed should be sown in the right ground he spent about the outward part of her body and withal threatened if she were with child he would slit the gut out of her belly.”⁷⁴ The practice itself may even have been widely employed. Nicolas Culpeper, herbalist, astrologer and popular writer on midwifery, dryly observed that though God had slain Onan for the sin of withdrawal, He had “been more merciful to many in England in the same case”.⁷⁵ Moreover, though Anne Laurence has suggested that contraception was chiefly used by married couples seeking to restrict their family size, or prolong the interval between births, understanding of the practice of *coitus interruptus* was certainly not restricted to the knowledge systems of married couples. A Somerset girl seduced in the rye may not have appreciated her partner’s precaution of withdrawing prior to ejaculation during the act of intercourse - “he had fouled her clothes” and she would have to clean them - but her testimony lends support to the wider application of contraceptive practices outside the bonds of marriage.⁷⁶

In addition, since the general method, if not the biological specifics, of procreation were commonly understood, some couples may have adopted less orthodox sexual positions to avoid the onset of pregnancy. Though intercourse in any

⁷³ A. McLaren, *A History of Contraception* (1990), 155; A. Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (1982), 71.

⁷⁴ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 171-2.

⁷⁵ Culpeper, *Directory*, 70.

⁷⁶ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 172.

position other than the missionary was regarded as sinful by professional moralists, and political economists saddled with the problem of demographic stagnation railed vehemently against married women, who “by their lewd conversations, prevent the bringing forth many children, which otherwise they might have had”, oral and anal sex - though rarely discussed - appear as features of the seventeenth century sexual landscape.⁷⁷ Much of the known incidence of oral sex appears to have centred on the royal court - the diary of Samuel Pepys has revealed the scandal surrounding the sexual activities of Charles II in 1670, after a decade in which his private parts were reputed to have been in everyone’s mouth - but its practice may have been considerably more widespread.⁷⁸ Certainly by the early eighteenth century the medical establishment had recognised its existence. Thus John Marten’s early eighteenth century treatise of the symptoms of venereal disease, which indicated more than a distasteful awareness for the practice of oral sex, railed against those who gained satisfaction “by a Man’s putting his erected Penis, into another Persons ... Mouth, using Friction, &c. between the Lips”, calling it “so very Beastly and so much to be abhorr’d, as to cause at the mentioning or but thinking of it, the utmost detestation, and loathing”.⁷⁹ Furthermore, limited references to heterosexual sodomy indicate that its existence was also acknowledged, though the extent to which it was undertaken in order to prevent conception or an alternative means to achieve orgasm is impossible to deduce. Its derogatory treatment in the diary of Simon Forman indicates that he at least, did not consider it a satisfactory option.⁸⁰

Additional means of obtaining sexual satisfaction while avoiding the risk of pregnancy were available through recourse to a number of manual aids, and prostitutes in the later sixteenth century both owned and used sex toys in the course of their work. Thomas Nashe’s *The Choise of Valentines*, a bawdy ballad set in Elizabethan London, follows the exploits of Tomalin, who visits a brothel but finds the erotic disrobing of his lover Mistress Frances more than he can stand. After his premature ejaculation, Frances proceeds to complete the encounter with the aid of a sex toy, claiming it “will refresh me well, And never make my tender belly swell.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Anon., “Arguments in Favour of Naturalizing Aliens, 1673” in Thirsk and Cooper, eds., *Economic Documents*, 742.

⁷⁸ Turner, “Pepys”, 104.

⁷⁹ Cited in R. Porter, “The Literature of Sexual Advice before 1800”, in R. Porter and M. Teich, eds., *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge, 1994), 147.

⁸⁰ Rowse, *Simon Forman*, 79.

⁸¹ Cited in Haynes, *Sex*, 78.

Though there is a dearth of such examples amongst the population at large, evidence of couples utilising manual objects as part of their sexual strategy are not completely absent from the historical record. In 1704, for example, Anna Edge cited John Watkinson of Dean in Cheshire for stating that he had “shaved her privity twice and put peppins [long apples] in and put a white candle up her body”.⁸² Once again, however, determining contraceptive intent is difficult, for the use of manual aids may have been little more than an addition to normal sexual practice. George Booth of Macclesfield, frustrated in his attempts to have sexual intercourse with Rebecca Blacklach in 1671, resorted to alternative means to gain satisfaction: “I gott my hand under her Apron and could nott gett any pricke stand but took out my knife haft and put it into her breach”.⁸³

Aside from the use of different positions and the adoption of manual aids to avoid the risk of pregnancy, there were also a number of mechanical devices that made conception less likely. Sponges and tampons appear in the contemporary literature as forms of female contraceptive, and though medical texts tended to refrain from a discussion of such items, there is a clear reference to a contraceptive sponge, for example, in *The Duchesse of Portsmouth’s Garland* in 1690.⁸⁴ In addition, there are early instances of the use of prophylactic condoms in the work of Gabriello Fallopius in 1564, and “Venus gloves”, though expensive, were available in the city of London in the sixteenth century.⁸⁵ It was not until around 1700, however, when condoms were more regularly constructed from animal bladders and fine skins, that they acquired any reliable ability to prevent pregnancy, and through much of the eighteenth century they tended to be more highly regarded for their prophylactic as opposed to their contraceptive properties.⁸⁶ Finally charms and amulets were also utilised by single women in a futile attempt to prevent conception - the astrologer Henry Coley was said in to have been selling astrological sigils at 4s. a piece to servant girls for use as a contraceptive device - but their relative rarity in the surviving

⁸² Addy, *Sin*, 134.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ McLaren, *Contraception*, 157.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 157-8; Haynes, *Sex*, 72.

⁸⁶ The first known published description of a condom is to be found in the work of Italian anatomist, Fallopius, *De Morbo Gallicoliber absolutimus* (1564), although it was prophylactic rather than contraceptive in intention. It may have had medieval origins. See N.E. Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* (1963), 188, 191.

literature suggests they were not accounted as reliable as other more familiar methods.⁸⁷

The general unreliability of all contraceptive devices, however, assuming any were deployed, is suggested by the fact that the number of references to such devices in contemporary documents is far outweighed by those aimed directly at aborting the foetus. Moreover, in this context, it is medical and quasi-medical literature that appears as a key player in the dissemination of knowledge to the general population, for midwifery advice, which provided information on how to promote conception and avoid miscarriage, if read against the grain, could offer veiled advice on how to inhibit conception or, more usually, bring on a miscarriage. Thus the physician James Rueff in 1637 wrote of women who “by lacing in themselves straight and hard ... may extinguish the feature conceived in their womb”, and Nicholas Culpeper, in his popular midwifery manual, listed a number of factors that were likely to induce miscarriage: strong purges; vomiting; great colds and heats (bath or a hothouse); under or overeating; and physical excess, which included falls, blows, running, leaping, lifting, or other immoderate exercise.⁸⁸ Midwives, too, were party to a body of knowledge that extended as far as premature inducement. The Myddle midwife attending Anna Clarke, wife of Richard, for example, gave him directions on how to make “iron hooks in his little smith’s forge” in order to effect the delivery of a foetus that had died in the womb.⁸⁹

Research by Kate Fisher on early twentieth century birth control, however, suggests that men’s knowledge of contraceptive techniques was far more extensive than women’s, and their networks of information more varied and developed.⁹⁰ Men in the early modern period too appear to have been readily versed in a variety of contraceptive techniques. In 1590 the vicar of Weaverham in Cheshire, for example, was roundly condemned for being “an instructor of young folks how to commit the sin of adultery and fornication and not beget or bring forth children”, while around three decades later Edward Harper, a married man of Hilmartin in Wiltshire, alleged that he could “have to do with wenches when he list and would choose whether he

⁸⁷ K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), 759-60, 223. Sigils were astrological signs or images supposedly imbued with magical powers.

⁸⁸ Laurence, *Women*, 65; Culpeper, *Directory*, 97, 113-4.

⁸⁹ Gough, *Myddle*, 99.

⁹⁰ K. Fisher, “‘She was quite satisfied with the arrangements I made’: gender and birth control in Britain 1920-1950”, *Past and Present*, 169 (2000): 168.

would beget them with child or not”.⁹¹ Such knowledge also appears to have extended to the sphere of abortive practices, in which the relevant information had been gained from a number of sources, not least of which was that of animal husbandry. For Alice Slaughter revealed that her lover had responded in the following manner when informed that she was with child: “if I met with her I will give her a kick or two and make her Cast her Calfe”.⁹² Similarly, James Bowrey, fearing he had unwittingly impregnated his girlfriend Margaret Royden, prepared her a drink from bearsfoot and water germander that he believed “would cause a mare to drop its foal and a woman her child”.⁹³

Abortifacient pills and potions, as concocted by Bowrey, appear prominently in the source material as remedies for unwanted pregnancies, and an understanding of their properties appears to have been widespread. Local apothecaries often supplied the necessary ingredients, which either they themselves, or knowledgeable women in the neighbourhood, mixed in the appropriate proportions. Thus Alice Butcher gave information in 1612 that it was possible to obtain abortifacients from an apothecary in Warrington, and a pregnant girl in Kilton, Somerset, claimed to have been approached by a local woman who offered “to make her a medicine for to destroy the child”.⁹⁴ A range of medications seems to have been available, from ingested preparations, which worked either by inducing severe vomiting or causing uterine contractions, to topical preparations, which recommended the massaging of the ointment directly onto the abdomen, thereby effecting a physical termination.⁹⁵ The use of savin, a herb which induced bleeding in the womb, was recorded during the trying of an case of incest in the reign of Elizabeth, and again at Holt in Derby in 1667, and in Wiltshire, as in other parts of England, the abortifacient properties of this particular herb, as well as a number of others, appear to have been well-known.⁹⁶ Numerous references to a variety of specified and unspecified potions and powders suggest the possibility of extensive recourse to medication, and although levels of efficacy remain unclear,

⁹¹ Stone, *Family*, 266; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 158.

⁹² P. Crawford, “Sexual Knowledge in England 1500-1700” in Porter and Teich, eds., *Sexual Knowledge*, 98.

⁹³ Addy, *Sin*, 139.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches*, 119.

⁹⁵ L.A. Pollock, “Embarking on a rough passage: the experience of pregnancy in early-modern society”, in V. Fildes, ed., *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England* (1990), 56.

⁹⁶ Eccles, *Obstetrics*, 70; Ingram, *Church Courts*, 159.

preparations mixed with heavy metals such as mercury frequently had an agonising effectiveness that could be lethal to the mother as well as the foetus.⁹⁷

Establishing the full extent of abortive practices in the early modern period continues to be problematic, for contemporary evidence of such practices remains particularly deficient. Though public opinion may have been hostile towards the employment of methods aimed at disguising evidence of promiscuity, the fact that it was not an offence under common law to induce miscarriage until the foetus had “quickenened”, usually around the fourth or fifth month, ensured that quantitative evidence on abortion levels simply does not exist.⁹⁸ Direct qualitative evidence of the type available in diaries and personal testimonies is also singularly lacking, but the fact that abortifacient remedies were kept by women in their private medical books, and not hidden in obscure medical treatises, suggests that the women in question had either used such remedies, or at least thought that at some point in time they may require access to them.⁹⁹ Moreover, modern attempts to measure shifts in the amount of abortion through recourse to mortality patterns have proved fruitless. Despite evidence of a high and fluctuating peri-natal mortality rate in the community of Hawkshead in Lancashire during the seventeenth century, with only two exceptions, decades with high foetal death ratios were also those with burial surpluses. Miscarriages were then more likely to have been the result of exogenous factors than occasioned by abortive techniques.¹⁰⁰

Investigations into the practice of infanticide have proved more revealing. In the medieval period the courts had punished both parents in the event of a child’s murder, but by the early seventeenth century, the crime had become primarily associated with attempts to conceal an illegitimate birth, and the infanticide statute rewritten to facilitate the investigation and punishment of “lewd” mothers: under the statute of 1624 any unmarried woman who could not prove that her baby was born

⁹⁷ L. Stone, *Road to Divorce 1530-1987* (1990), 62.

⁹⁸ McLaren, *Contraception*, 160. It did not become a criminal offence to induce an abortion until 1803. See Laurence, *Women*, 65.

⁹⁹ Pollock, “Embarking”, 56. Ralph Josselin recorded that his wife had five miscarriages between the births of their seventh and tenth children; these may have been age-related or consciously induced as a form of birth control. See Macfarlane, *Family Life*, 83.

¹⁰⁰ R.S. Schofield, “Peri-natal mortality in Hawkshead, Lancashire, 1581-1710”, *Local Population Studies*, 4 (1970), 15. The foetal (stillbirth) death rate, which stood at 16 per 1,000 in the 1590s had risen to 62 per 1,000 by the 1630s. The rate fell back in the 1640s and 1650s, but rose again in the 1660s, reaching a peak of 96 per 1,000 in the 1690s. The figure offered by John Graunt for London in the 1660s hovered at around 50 per 1,000. See Houlbrooke, *English Family*, 128.

dead was presumed to be guilty of its murder.¹⁰¹ Consequently infanticide in Stuart England has been characterised as “an offence committed under exceptional circumstances, related largely to the concealment or disposal of illegitimate children”.¹⁰² Indeed, this was precisely the view taken by Thomas Rugg in the 1650s, as he recounted in his diurnal the dreadful fate of a woman who sought to rid herself of an unwanted child.

To shunn the shame of [it], shee put her infant alive into an earthren pott and covred it over with cold watter and put a paper one the top of the pot and sent it to the bakehouse ... The heat of the oven warmed the watter and the child revived and it cryed. The baker took out the pott and took out the child, and it lived two houers. The baker made a very close search and the party was found and apprehended, and att sessions condemned and suffred att Tyborne for this fact.¹⁰³

Models of infanticidal women in broadsides and dramas depicted “unnatural mothers” and “bloody mothers” involved in graphic violence, but the language that defendants used revealed them as participants not in a crime of violence, but one of passivity and neglect.¹⁰⁴ Motives were individualised and subjective, but given the enormity of the social disapprobation that confronted unmarried mothers, it would not be unusual to find a small number who, under the weight of mental instability or emotional pressure, resorted to murder: of the sixty mothers accused of infanticide in the surviving Assize files for seventeenth century Essex, fifty-three were described as spinsters and were likely to have been single.¹⁰⁵ While the crime may not have been common, it appears to have been far from unknown - analysis of infant mortality in the community of Terling has encouraged Keith Wrightson to suggest that around two

¹⁰¹ McLaren, *Contraception*, 159; Crawford, “Sexual Knowledge”, 99. The profile of single mothers as murderers was higher in the Elizabethan period. Though court records from Nottinghamshire between 1530-58 reveal no cases of infanticide, those of Middlesex between 1550-1603 contain eleven examples and those of Elizabethan Essex thirty, predominantly committed by single mothers. See P.E. Hair, “Homicide, infanticide, and child assault in late Tudor Middlesex”, *Local Population Studies*, 9 (1972): 44.

¹⁰² K. Wrightson, “Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-century England”, *Local Population Studies*, 15 (1975), 19.

¹⁰³ W.L. Sachse, ed., *The Diurnall of Thomas Rugg 1659-1661*, Camden third series, 91 (1961): 33.

¹⁰⁴ L. Gowing, “Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Past and Present*, 156 (1997): 106.

¹⁰⁵ Wrightson, “Infanticide”, 12.

per cent of bastard children may have been killed at birth - and in addition was not gender-specific. Though characterised as the crime of the desperate woman, recourse to infanticide was also an option available to the desperate or unscrupulous man. Thomas West suffered imprisonment in 1687 on account of being suspected of murdering his bastard child, and Richard Skeete, a weaver, who enjoyed a certain notoriety as a cunning man in the 1630s, had attempted to abort four children he had fathered on the body of Lydia Downes before resorting in the final instance to their murder, either by administering poison or inflicting fatal injuries. Moreover, when Lydia subsequently gave birth to a child that could have been fathered by either himself or Richard Bryant, the two men conspired together to threaten her life if she prevented them from murdering the child - "they would make her sure for ever going home herself".¹⁰⁶

III. The regulation of procreative intercourse

Though the use of contraception, abortion and infanticide are signalled in the surviving documentation, without a better understanding of the effectiveness of contraception, and a more accurate picture of the full extent of abortion and infanticide, it is difficult to escape the received opinion that the onset of sexual intercourse, for the great majority of single women at least, was situated within the context of a forthcoming marriage. Whereas single men may have succeeded in circumventing the restrictions on extra-marital intercourse - married women according to the Somerset evidence quite frequently had sexual relations with men other than their husband, and often had intercourse with their unmarried male servants - in an age in which contraception remained at best unreliable, the ability of single women to disguise any amount of extra-marital sexual intercourse in the long term, and even in the short, was greatly circumscribed.¹⁰⁷ Consequently it is not surprising to find that the majority of single women (granted on their own admission) who entered into an illicit sexual relationship did so on the promise or understanding that

¹⁰⁶ The Calendar of Prisoners for the County Gaol in Oxford dated 5th April 1687 reveals that Thomas West was incarcerated on suspicion of murdering his bastard child: M.S. Gretton, ed., *Oxfordshire Justices of the Peace in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxfordshire Record Society, 16 (1934): 18. In her testimony Lydia claimed she had little option therefore but to consent to Bryant strangling the child. See Cressy, *Travesties*, 76-83.

¹⁰⁷ Quaiife, *Wanton Wenches*, 246. "Wives", as the Duchess of Newcastle was wont to remark, were "more apt to yield than Maids or Widows, having a cloak to cover their shame or reproach, and a husband to father their children". Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 19.

marriage was to follow. Under such circumstances, pregnancy and childbirth outside wedlock in the Tudor and Stuart periods appears most realistically as an unintended or unexpected interruption to forthcoming marriage plans rather than the product of a blatant disregard for the existing moral and marital norms. Indeed, there is more than a measure of support for this hypothesis. The work of David Levine and Keith Wrightson, for example, has not only revealed that the age at which women bore their first illegitimate child correlated closely with the age at which women married for the first time, but also that the two moved in synthesis: the rise in the age of women at first marriage visible in the second half of the seventeenth century is mirrored in the rise in the age at which women gave birth to their first illegitimate child.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, the work of Richard Adair has indicated that during the second half of the seventeenth century, the link between intercourse and marriage became even more insistent, giving rise to an increase in the proportion of brides who appear to have waited until marriage to engage in sexual intercourse, and a fall in the proportion of more heavily pregnant brides during the period in question.¹⁰⁹

Given the extraordinary levels of apparent restraint, much of the historical discussion has focussed on the nature of the mechanisms that were capable of eliciting such powerful levels of self-discipline. Thus Lawrence Stone has argued that the rising levels of continence suggested by falling bastardy rates were predominantly the result of an expanding puritan-based ideology, which channelled and controlled sexuality “partly by the strong pressure of community feeling at the local level, partly by the legal pressure of Puritan magistrates and the propaganda pressure of Puritan preachers, and partly by a successful internalisation of ideas about chastity and virginity”.¹¹⁰ Peter Laslett, on the other hand, prefers to characterise the restraint of this period in terms of two dominant influences rather than one single determinant - those of finance and religion. His interpretation of increased pre-marital chastity therefore revolves around the existence of a precocious version of the modern super ego, a system of personal discipline forged out of a combination of Christian ethics and socio-economic necessity.¹¹¹ Finally, Gerald Quaife has offered a more

¹⁰⁸ D. Levine and K. Wrightson, “The social context of illegitimacy in early modern England”, in Laslett et al., eds., *Bastardy*, 161.

¹⁰⁹ Adair, *Courtship*, 100, 106. However, as Richard Smith has pointed out, this could also have been related to the rise in clandestine marriages, which allowed marriage to take place more swiftly than under normal church procedures. Smith, “Marriage Processes”, 87-8.

¹¹⁰ L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977), 645.

¹¹¹ Laslett, *World*, ch. 7.

pragmatic explanation for the rise in sexual continence, in which motivation was determined more unilaterally by the role of economics. In presenting a picture of a liberated and sexually unrestrained peasantry in which the act of intercourse only became a problem if pregnancy occurred outside marriage, and only then because of the financial implications of child maintenance, Quaiife has denied the validity of morality as a useful heuristic device.¹¹²

Irrespective of their specific theoretical positions, nevertheless, historians' explanations of increased sexual restraint have tended to focus most closely on the institutional manifestations of the marital discourse, in this case the repressive machinery of the church and state. From an ecclesiastical viewpoint, the purge on popular morals did not represent an innovation on the part of the clergy, for such discipline had been a feature of the church from the later medieval period.¹¹³ Though the church courts had lost some of their effectiveness in the crisis of the mid sixteenth century, there was a resurgence of interest in the prosecution of moral crimes after 1560, and this movement to sanitise the behaviour of the population at large gathered increased momentum after 1580.¹¹⁴ By the end of the sixteenth century the Church had not only made considerable attempts to gain a tighter public hold over entry into the matrimonial estate by suppressing customary marriage practices, but in addition had introduced a more rigorous policy towards the prevention of pre-nuptial fornication. Though Martin Ingram has suggested this pattern exhibited an element of regional differentiation in the period before 1590, a more nationwide pattern of prosecutions emerged in the subsequent decade as the number of cases accelerated noticeably, and this situation persisted until well into the seventeenth century.¹¹⁵ With the assistance of parish officers and the more pious members of the community, the church was able to call to account all those who failed to adhere to its strict moral code through the process of the visitation - the regular attendance of the bishop. Individuals accused of sexual misdemeanours were presented to the court by local parish officials, and those subsequently convicted were ordered to perform a shaming ceremony of penance in public, involving the confession of their sin in the presence of

¹¹² Quaiife, *Wanton Wenches*, 178-83.

¹¹³ Ingram, "Reform" 139.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

the entire congregation at church on Sunday, or in the market place of the local town on market day, while wearing a white sheet and carrying a white rod.¹¹⁶

Opinions differ as to the effectiveness of the church courts in curbing sexual immorality in the pre-war era. Though Lawrence Stone has indicated that the courts were “reasonably successful in keeping the lid on the somewhat boisterous popular sexuality” of the early modern period, he has been sceptical about their administrative efficiency.¹¹⁷ Their powers of enforcement appear to have been limited, for as many as half of all those who were accused appear to have preferred excommunication to court appearance, and only a small percentage of them performed any penance.¹¹⁸ In addition, the courts retained the archaic oath of compurgation, by which men from the locality could be called upon to testify not to the fact of the guilt or innocence of the accused, but the belief in it. Thus a Cambridgeshire woman managed to arrange the dismissal of her charge of incontinence in 1638 upon compurgation, even though those hearing her case asserted: “we verily believe her to be guilty of the crime”.¹¹⁹ The system was clearly open to corruption for those with the necessary financial resources, while poorer individuals, less able to procure the appearance of their neighbours, were most likely to have felt the burden of punishment.

Martin Ingram, on the other hand, has argued with considerable conviction for a much greater level of court efficacy, at least in relation to charges of fornication. Despite their apparent “lack of teeth”, Ingram has argued that the increased rigour of the church courts with regard to illicit coition helped inculcate stricter attitudes towards extra-marital intercourse among the population at large.¹²⁰ Success depended in the first instance on the rate of detection and presentment of offenders by churchwardens, and in the second, on the extent of court authority, but even though levels of prosecution accordingly exhibited regional and chronological inconsistencies, Ingram claims to have identified the presence of a “perceptible hardening of attitudes towards pre-nuptial incontinence”, at least in certain areas and among some social groups, in their wake.¹²¹ The threat of excommunication was usually enough to secure the appearance of the more settled householders if not the dispossessed, and the penalties the courts were able to impose, especially those

¹¹⁶ Stone, *Family*, 399; Ingram, “Reform”, 137-8.

¹¹⁷ Stone, *Road*, 67.

¹¹⁸ *Idem*, *Family*, 399.

¹¹⁹ C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964), 310.

¹²⁰ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 323.

backed up by substantial fees, can in no way be seen as derisory.¹²² Moreover, since courts consistently upheld the immorality of fornication, and increased the volume of prosecutions for ante-nuptial intercourse after 1590, they may have been a major factor in the fall in bridal pregnancy visible in some areas by the reign of Charles I.¹²³

The impetus behind the ecclesiastical drive for improvement was clearly moralistic in intention. Protestant insistence on the nature of man as corrupt encouraged hard-line Puritans in particular to try to inculcate into each individual the discipline necessary for personal salvation, though the mediums of writing, teaching and preaching.¹²⁴ In articulating the shift in sexual behaviour in the seventeenth century in terms of a generally accepted pattern of internalised and enforced social discipline which gradually seeped down the social hierarchy, Lawrence Stone has cited the growth of a puritan mentality as the prime mover: “the chief cause of the unusually high and rising standard of sexual morality in early seventeenth century England was the external pressure of Puritan organisation and Puritan preaching, which slowly affected the attitudes of nearly all the propertied classes, whether Puritan, Anglican or Arminian”.¹²⁵

The combination of doctrinal strength and ecclesiastical justice may have wielded considerable power over popular sexual mores in a number of specific socio-economic settings. David Levine and Keith Wrightson, for example, have posited a tightening of sexual morals in the rural community of Terling in the seventeenth century as a result of the emergence of a group of parish officers heavily influenced by puritanical doctrine.¹²⁶ Moreover, they have evidenced their theory of tougher attitudes towards prenuptial fornication by reference to the harsher discipline meted out to pregnant brides in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. For not only were a larger percentage of offences brought before the court during this period as a result of shifts in local tolerances, but there were in addition substantial changes in the

¹²¹ Idem, “Reform”, 149.

¹²² Idem, *Church Courts*, 366. In Durham, Marie Daniell, spinster, was committed to the gaol until she entered a bond to attend court. When found guilty she was ordered to do penance in five churches and pay £20. See Longstaffe, ed., *High Commission Court*, 48.

¹²³ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 366. The reluctance of judges to pronounce in favour of disputed contracts, a situation which both reflected and reinforced the decline of spousals, may also have served to lower illegitimacy and reduce bridal pregnancy: *ibid.* Canon lawyers were increasingly reluctant to entertain the claims of women who had been driven to court by pregnancy after being deserted by their suitor; as a result, fewer came to the court to seek validation. See Stone, *Road*, 77.

¹²⁴ Addy, *Sin*, 19.

¹²⁵ Stone, *Family*, 395.

¹²⁶ Wrightson, “Social Context”, 172-3.

nature of these prosecutions: before the 1620s prosecution for bridal pregnancy was rare if the marriage subsequently materialised, but after this time prosecutions were brought even if the couple had been married some time.¹²⁷ In other areas, however, the connection between puritan ideas and increased sexual continence appears to have been more spurious. In the city of York, a general report in 1599 outlining the fact that many servants and unmarried women had become pregnant in recent years may indeed have been produced by a body of alderman increasingly enamoured with puritan ideals, but Puritanism came late to York, and the Corporation had taken a hard line on sexual crimes for many years.¹²⁸ Linking a rising concern over fornication to the increasing dominance of a puritan mentality may be extremely seductive, but while some areas may have been more coloured than others by puritan ideas, there is little evidence to suggest that attempts to enforce godly discipline by “the hotter sort of Protestant” had any unique resonance.¹²⁹ Sexual probity was not an exclusively puritan concept - records of other christian organisations such as the Quakers and the Church of Christ demonstrated evidence of equally repressive attitudes towards sexual incontinence - and sexual morality could also be strict in areas where Puritanism was weak.¹³⁰

Recapturing the effectiveness of either a specific or more generalised christian ideology on a national population remains fraught with difficulties. In theory church attendance was compulsory for everyone, and Justices of the Peace were ordered to enforce it on a nationwide basis in 1601.¹³¹ Yet the habit of regular churchgoing was never successfully inculcated into all the inhabitants of Stuart England, especially the poorer ones. Accordingly, in 1625, John Walls of Stadhampton in Oxfordshire attempted to explain his contumacy before the bishop on the grounds that that “he had not clothes fit to come in company; ... but now he keepeth the swine, and hopeth he

¹²⁷ Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty*, 132-3. Even as late as 1680 in northern Lincolnshire church wardens were still presenting couples for pre-marital fornication after their marriage: at the Caistor visitation in October 1680 William and Sarah Johnson of Stallingborough, and William and Ann Ebletroith of Wootton were presented for incontinency before marriage. See L.A.O. Ch P/L 1680.

¹²⁸ D. Palliser, “Civic mentality and the environment in Tudor York”, in J. Barry, *The Tudor and Stuart Town, A Reader in English Urban History 1530-1688* (1990), 234.

¹²⁹ A. Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (1975), 61.

¹³⁰ R. Hayden, ed., *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol 1640-1687*, Bristol Record Society, 27 (1974); R. Mortimer, ed., *Minute Book of the Mens' Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol 1667-1686*, Bristol Record Society, 21 (1971); idem, ed., *Minute Book of the Mens' Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol 1686-1704*, Bristol Record Society, 30 (1977); Ingram, *Church Courts*, 112-4.

¹³¹ Hill, *Society*, 472.

shall earn money and will come".¹³² In addition, the church and religion in general were probably most ineffective in establishing control over the growing number of transients, many of whom were young, single migrants.¹³³ Even after the parliamentary ordinance of 1644 had obliged magistrates to order rogues and vagrants to attend the local church, there is some doubt as to the effectiveness of church dogma on the more wayward members of early modern society.¹³⁴ Anthony Fletcher's work on Sussex has indicated that the religiously apathetic who did appear did little more than conspire to turn public worship into something of a travesty by spewing, farting, playing cards and singing rudely.¹³⁵ The church also experienced the continuing problem of maintaining pastoral discipline and authority, and reliance on the clergy for the delivery and maintenance of moral order proved especially problematic in the large dioceses.¹³⁶ Furthermore, if the number of investigations of sexual misconduct by priests which appear in the court records are in any way indicative of a national trend, the moral standard of the clergy appears to have fallen far short of desired levels.¹³⁷

On the basis of this and other evidence, it has been suggested that only a small minority of the population adhered to the prescribed christian sexual mores.¹³⁸ Thomas Whythorne may have resisted the desire to seduce the young widow he was courting before marriage on the grounds that by doing so "we should have provoked God's heavy displeasure and wrath, to have lighted upon us for our wickedness", but not everyone agreed on the distinction between moral and immoral behaviour.¹³⁹ In the case of an almsman expelled from Dulwich college in 1632 for attempting the honour of a fellow almswoman, the almsman in question reasoned in his defence that "fornication was not a sin at all if both parties are agreed".¹⁴⁰ Thus it may more often have been the fear of discovery rather than anxiety about the consequences of divine wrath that directed sexual activity. In 1633 Jane Hurst of Blackrod in Cheshire was

¹³² Hill, *Society*, 473.

¹³³ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 123.

¹³⁴ Hill, *Society*, 473.

¹³⁵ Fletcher, *County Community*, 88.

¹³⁶ Addy, *Sin*, 20-45.

¹³⁷ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 183. One such example is that of Robert Foulkes, vicar of Stanton Lacy in Shropshire, who was accused of incontinency with Anne Atkinson, spinster, in 1676. See D. Turner, " ' Nothing is so secret but shall be revealed': The Scandalous Life of Robert Foulkes", in Hitchcock and Cohen, eds., *English Masculinities*, 169-92.

¹³⁸ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 178-82.

¹³⁹ Stone, *Family*, 396.

not only accused of being “naughty with Edward Dughtie in a wood” but also of offering Henry Coiter’s wife money afterwards in order to buy her silence.¹⁴¹ Moreover, Ben Jonson’s first *Song, to Celia* indicated that the concept at least was not an alien one.

Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumour are but toys,
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
So removèd by our wile?
'Tis no sin love’s fruit to steal;
But the sweet theft to reveal,
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.¹⁴²

Increasing state - as opposed to ecclesiastical - interest in ante-nuptial fornication arose largely out of a concern with the control of bastardy, and in this sense Quaipe’s dictum that fornication only aroused disapproval when such activity threatened the economic order of the community has a great deal of resonance. Though Justices of the Peace envisaged bastardy as a moral scourge as well as a financial burden, economic concerns were clearly of significance in driving increasing levels of prosecution. In Keevil in Wiltshire, for example, the first presentment for ante-nuptial incontinence appeared in 1599 in the wake of a disastrous series of harvests, and was followed by thirteen further prosecutions in the next three decades, eight of which occurred during the 1620s when Keevil, like other towns in Wiltshire’s cloth-making area, were labouring under the weight of considerable economic pressure.¹⁴³ But while attitudes may have crystallized in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when levels of illegitimacy rose to their peak in the wake of

¹⁴⁰ K. Thomas, “The Puritans and Adultery. The Act of 1650 Reconsidered”, in D. Pennington and K. Thomas, eds., *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (1978), 261.

¹⁴¹ Addy, *Sin*, 137.

¹⁴² H. Haydn, *The Portable Elizabethan Reader* (1946), 669.

¹⁴³ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 235.

economic recession, harvest failures and rising inflation, they appear to have been consolidated in the altered social climate of the Restoration when Justices became “exclusively pre-occupied with the economic problems of transferring the maintenance costs of a bastard child from the poor rate of the parish to the father, or failing that some other body”.¹⁴⁴

Certainly during the course of the seventeenth century, local magistrates appear to have used every means at their disposal to prevent the cost of bastard children falling on the poor rates. Thus a woman convicted of fornication for the first time was usually whipped in the nearest market town as a deterrent to others, repeat offenders were likely to find themselves committed to the local house of correction and set to hard labour, and from 1610 magistrates acquired additional legislative powers that allowed them to sentence mothers of illegitimate children likely to become a burden on the parish to periods of anything up to a year in the local House of Correction.¹⁴⁵ Finally, as community concern over levels of bastardy increased, rumour of illicit activity alone became sufficient cause to set the magisterial process in motion, and those merely suspected of fornication could find themselves subject to harsh punishment. Information received by the local constable to the effect that “a man and a woman be in adultery, or fornication together, (or that a man and a woman of evil report are gone to a suspected house together in the night)” required immediate investigation. Any couple taken together in fornication, or any individuals likely to engage in such - a girl found alone in a garden after midnight “being there at such an inconvenient time” for instance - were deemed potential threats to good order and subjected to a fine, imprisonment or a stint in the stocks.¹⁴⁶ In this respect state and church proceeded hand in hand, for a growing concern over the burden of poor relief

¹⁴⁴ Stone, *Family*, 400. Stone has argued elsewhere that by the very end of the seventeenth century the church courts had largely ceased to impose shame punishments, and J.P.'s were only interested in suppressing sexual deviance if it cost money. He also provides evidence of a case in which parish officers attempted to force a man from another parish, with the assistance of the local J.P., to marry a pregnant spinster living in their own, in order to avoid the cost of maintenance. Stone, *Uncertain Unions*, 83-7.

¹⁴⁵ Idem., *Family*, 400; W.L. Sachse, ed., *Minutes of the Norwich Court of Mayoralty 1630-31*, Norfolk Record Society, 15 (1942), 26. Ingram has shown that mothers of bastards in Wiltshire were sometimes but not always stocked or whipped in the early years of the seventeenth century, but by the 1620s were almost invariably sentenced to a year in the local House of Correction. Ingram, “Reform”, 155. Comparatively speaking, the introduction of the Adultery Act in 1650, supposedly for the purpose of “suppressing the detestable sins of incest, adultery and fornication”, may have ushered in a less repressive era of state punishment, at least in the case of pre-marital intercourse: it introduced a national standard sentence of three months in gaol for the crime of fornication. See Thomas, “Puritans”, 257.

¹⁴⁶ Quaiife, *Wanton Wenches*, 42.

appears to have encouraged a greater perseverance among the community at large to establish details of paternity. There are numerous examples of midwives successfully interrogating unmarried women during labour in order to obtain the name of the child's father, on pain of death and damnation, and according to Ingram local ministers sometimes refused to church such women, or baptise their children, in order to elicit the required information, even though strictly speaking such behaviour was illegal.¹⁴⁷ Evidence of presentments at the archdeacon's visitations in north Wiltshire, at least, reflect the fact that more persistent attempts at recovering the names of alleged fathers met with considerable success: by the 1620s, eighty per cent of fathers' names were listed in paternity cases as opposed to the much lower figure of sixty per cent that had prevailed in the 1590s.¹⁴⁸

Regardless of whether the motivation behind the increased level of prosecution was rooted primarily in economic or moral concerns, its effect was to provide a community environment in which pre-marital sexual activity was routinely patrolled and regulated. George Tewson and Joanne Lovett, for example, who had been living together for some time, were brought before the church courts at Ely in 1634 in order to explain their tardiness in getting married, and in another case in Essex, a couple were similarly accused of "long tyme lyving incontinentlye and slanderously to the offence of their neighbours".¹⁴⁹ The border between respectability and immorality was not immutable - in Wiltshire, traditional tolerances towards ante-nuptial fornication persisted in areas experiencing social and economic stability - but whatever the level of local tolerances, any breach was likely to engender community hostility, and result in prosecution.¹⁵⁰ In addition, all budding relationships were closely monitored. There appear to have been few opportunities for individuals to enjoy complete privacy in pre-industrial communities and villagers were constantly prying into each other's affairs.¹⁵¹ Eavesdropping could prove problematic and was not always tolerated - in 1648 a Horsham husbandman and his wife were fined for it at the local sessions - but prying witnesses were not generally required to justify their

¹⁴⁷ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 262-3.

¹⁴⁸ Ingram, "Reform", 155.

¹⁴⁹ Griffiths, *Youth*, 265.

¹⁵⁰ Ingram, "Reform", 149; idem, *Church Courts*, 233-5; Griffiths, *Youth*, 264.

¹⁵¹ Gough's *History of Myddle* is a fascinating example of one man's interest in the affairs of his neighbours. MacFarlane has suggested that kin and neighbours were interested in each other's conformity since hostile attitudes could react disastrously on the whole community. Macfarlane, *Family Life*, 194.

actions: constant collective surveillance of the community seems to have been taken for granted. Indeed this may have been a factor in the repression of opportunistic sexual encounters, since surveillance of this kind appears to have turned up numerous examples of illicit behaviour. Thus in mid-seventeenth century Southampton John Pee and William Harper related to their local authorities how they had witnessed “Thomas Sundy a Soldier and Joane Inglefeild the servant maid of Ellis Antam of this Towne Innholder have the Carnall Knowledge of one the others bodyes in the ditch of the said Feild twice after one another”, while an equally voyeuristic Steyning youth “looking in a hole” in 1610 happened to witness a stable hand in the act of bugging a mare; he called a passer-by to witness the act, who in turned called his mistress, and the case was subsequently reported to the court.¹⁵² Parochial supervision appears as a constant that could not be ignored, with some parishioners apparently making the disclosure of fornication their chief aim in life: Charles Holland and John Taylor, self-appointed sexual investigators in Rochdale, Lancashire, took to lurking “under the walls of [Margaret] Wyldes house to see when Ottiwell would be naughty with Margaret”.¹⁵³

Community policing, though alerted initially by mere suspicion, could turn into full-scale persecution. William and Margaret Simons, brought before the Star Chamber in 1620 had recently moved to Burton on Trent, but though the couple claimed to be brother and sister, they were suspected by residents to be unrelated. As a result, gossip and speculation abounded, and the couple “grew to be generally defamed and illreported of throughout the towne”. They were given the opportunity to reform - one of their neighbours warned them of the community’s suspicions and indicated that punishment would follow if their actions did not change - but the couple chose instead to uphold the innocence and veracity of their relationship. This state of affairs clearly proved unsatisfactory, and the neighbour in question along with other townspeople decided to investigate further. Upon making a search of the couple’s dwelling, the brother and sister were discovered *in flagrante delicto*, and the truth of the situation revealed. At this point the incestuous pair were marched summarily through the town and placed immediately in the stocks.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² S.D. Thompson, ed., *The Book of Examinations and Depositions 1648-1663*, Southampton Record Society, 37 (1994): 178. Relationships with soldiers put the community immediately on their guard, since they were transient figures. See Fletcher, *County*, 159.

¹⁵³ *Addy*, Sin, 130.

¹⁵⁴ Griffiths, *Youth*, 262-3.

Though private attitudes towards ante-nuptial fornication may have been relatively tolerant, public attitudes appear to have become increasingly rigid. Community concerns over illicit sexual behaviour were likely to have been multifaceted in their origin, driven by a complex and locally specific combination of moral outrage and economic concern. Whereas the more pious members of the community undoubtedly attempted to inculcate suitable standards of moral behaviour in their less pious neighbours, ratepayers may have been primarily concerned to prevent participation in any activity that would effectively increase their tax burden. Families and friends, on the other hand, may have sought to prevent any sexual encounter that might result in an unsuitable or undesirable match. Nevertheless, moral rectitude provided a plausible cover for economic concern, for while those of middling status frequently proved most active in addressing moral laxity, it was precisely this group of taxpayers to whom the practical consequences of illicit intercourse proved most burdensome. There was also a hidden agenda of community discrimination: the fact that representatives of both the church and the secular courts were willing to act upon rumour, or “common fame”, allowed innumerable occasions for the avenging of specific personal grievances.¹⁵⁵ Taken together, the contemporary court systems offered a valid reason for the sexual conduct of neighbours to be discussed at length in churches, alehouses, markets and fairs, a situation that greatly encouraged the activities of spies and informers, and created regular opportunities for those intent on corruption or blackmail.¹⁵⁶

Significantly, it is an understanding of the contemporary link between sexual probity and social and economic reputation that is perhaps most critical to any explanation of seventeenth century sexual behaviour. Reputation in the early modern period was synonymous with social judgement, for concepts of honour and credit determined perceptions of integrity, trustworthiness, and reliability.¹⁵⁷ However, while personal credit was measured by recourse to a number of cultural indicators, it

¹⁵⁵ Ingram quotes the statement of a witness in 1608 who indicated that “ the report and speech of six sufficient men in a parish maketh a public fame”. Ingram, *Church Courts*, 329.

¹⁵⁶ In warning visitors to London of the villainy and corruption evident in the city, Robert Greene enlightened them as to the practices of the “cosener”, whose job was to blackmail those involved in premarital sex. Such individuals, he claimed, “go spieng about where any marchant, or marchants prentice, citizen, welthy farmer, or other of good credit, either accompanie with any woman familiarly or els hath gotten some mayd with child”, in order to blackmail such persons into paying to keep their good name. R. Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosenage* (1591), sig D3.

was sexual reputation that constituted the mainstay of a broader set of qualities both men and women required to maintain their social status - examples of contumacy in the records of the church courts were most pronounced amongst those charged with major sexual offences, no doubt, as Ingram has suggested, because those accused had a great deal more to lose by appearing.¹⁵⁸ Indeed the loss of honour appears to have been serious enough on occasions to require immediate remedial action. Accordingly, a genuine concern with the maintenance of his personal reputation and that of his family encouraged the young Roger Lowe to confront William Morris who had cast aspersions on the legality of his parenthood, and deliver a suitable physical reproof: according to his diary, Roger sent for William to come to his chamber, where he “buffeted hime very mery”.¹⁵⁹

Morality was also representative of a broader social credibility. When Thomas Stobbes was accused of marrying Elizabeth Denton clandestinely in 1633, for example, his brother claimed he was “accounted for an honest man, and of good family, and conversacionn, and never was detected for fornication or adultery”.¹⁶⁰ Contrariwise, evidence of sexual immorality revealed an individual as untrustworthy and unreliable: William Maddock denounced the credibility of Helen Ingham’s testimony when she came forward to act as witness in a case against his aunt, on the grounds that a certain Captain Critchley had been “naughty with her one Hundred Times since the Sessions began”.¹⁶¹ For sexual credibility had far greater resonance in the sphere of female honour than it did in that of the male. Good credit was not only harder for women to achieve, but distinctly more vulnerable to any suggestion of sexual impropriety.¹⁶² Thus when Elizabeth Baxter, spinster, of Langcliffe near Settle in Yorkshire, heard some gossip in 1697 that a single woman she knew was reputedly pregnant, she vociferously attacked the scandal mongers, declaring that they “might as well take her life as her good name from her”.¹⁶³

Since all female action was “filtered through the lens of sexual honesty” a woman’s reputation could be destroyed at a stroke by discrediting her sexual

¹⁵⁷ See esp. Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, and Muldrew, *Economy*. Such was the importance of maintaining a good name, that special prayers were written and said for the keeping of it. See “A prayer for the keeping of a good name”, in Clay, ed., *Private Prayers*, 103.

¹⁵⁸ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 353.

¹⁵⁹ Sachse, ed., *Roger Lowe*, 105.

¹⁶⁰ Longstaffe, ed., *High Commission Court*, 71-2.

¹⁶¹ Addy, *Sin*, 143.

¹⁶² Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 130.

¹⁶³ Addy, *Sin*, 114.

probity.¹⁶⁴ A young woman who found herself pregnant and unmarried was therefore subject to harsh sanctions. In the short-term, discovery of ante-nuptial coition, usually a function of the visible evidence - a “rising apron” or the delivery of a child - commonly resulted in instant dismissal, court prosecution, public penance, and in the final instance, social ostracism.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, many women whose places of settlement appeared in any way questionable were unceremoniously hustled from parish to parish to avoid adding to local poor rates, regardless of any advancing pregnancy. In the longer term, the process of giving birth to an illegitimate child had considerable implications in terms of future economic security, for it rendered the prospect of marriage in the future less likely. Though local census listings indicate that some unmarried mothers were successful in their attempts to secure a husband - James Baker, a young butcher of Ecclesall had married Morgit Dors, despite that fact that she had given birth to a bastard in 1681 and Margaret Astbury’s illegitimate son John was living with her and her husband in Stoke on Trent in 1701 - Pam Sharpe has indicated that bastard bearers often did not marry, and when they did they were frequently older than their more virtuous counterparts.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, since employment opportunities for single mothers were limited and poor relief was generally withheld from women of a questionable nature - even the most charitable institutions like that of St Thomas’ hospital in London reserved admittance for the relief “of honest persons and not of harlots” - many unmarried mothers without the support of friends or family sank inexorably into vagrancy.¹⁶⁷

It is relatively easy to understand why single women would consider at some length the consequences of illicit sexual intercourse prior to engaging in it, but linking falling levels of illegitimacy in seventeenth century England to a shift in the sexual mores of single women is more problematic. Why should a rising proportion of single women in the course of the seventeenth century apparently choose to remain virgins until their marriage had been solemnised? Were they, as Stone has suggested,

¹⁶⁴ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 129. While popular literature reiterated the strength of the relationship between sexual reputation and honour for women, Gowing indicates that women who complained in the courts that sexual slander had damaged their reputation rarely produced evidence in support of their claim. This may have reflected the difficulty in obtaining proof, but it could also suggest that the effects of such slander enjoyed wide cultural acceptance. *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶⁵ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 202-3. Men, too, could suffer as a result of their extra-marital affairs. Sir Nathaniel Bacon dismissed John Lambert, blacksmith, after he was alleged to have fathered an illegitimate child. See Amussen, *Ordered Society*, 162-3.

¹⁶⁶ Ecclesall 1693/98, 29; Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, local census 1701, SH30; Sharpe, “Literally Spinsters”, 57.

the victims of an expanding puritan mentality that sought to improve human morality in general and sexual morality in particular, or was there an alternative explanation that can account for the decline in the levels of bastardy visible in the early seventeenth century? On one level, the rise in pre-marital chastity may in part be a function of the changes attitudes towards marriage formation, for as the church sought to gain control over entry into marriage and solemnisation emerged as the definitive means by which it became legally constituted, the concomitant decline in customary marriage practices - in which sexual intercourse had sealed the bond - had clear implications for the extent of pre-marital intercourse. On another level, however, it may be possible to relate shifts in the level of such illicit activity to the changing profile of female offenders. For in the Essex village of Terling, Wrightson and Levine have evidenced the fact that relative to men, women who bore illegitimate children may have been more likely to come from positions of low social status: of fifty women named in bastardy cases in Terling between 1590 and 1640, only nine could be identified as being at least of middling status, while the comparative figure for fifty fathers of illegitimate children that could be identified stood at fourteen.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, as the seventeenth century progressed, bridal pregnancy and cases of illegitimacy were increasingly confined to the poorest sectors of society.¹⁶⁹ Clearly there was a measure of perception involved, but it could also be argued that it would have been precisely those women who had least to lose and most to gain from engaging in illicit sexual activity. During periods of extreme economic crisis in the early seventeenth century a higher proportion of poorer women may either have attempted to use sexual favours in order to effect a marriage contract, or alternately may have been unable to proceed with a planned marriage because of financial constraint. As the century progressed and the economy recovered the proportion of both the former and the latter would most probably have fallen, with the result that there were fewer pre-marital pregnancies. In addition, in periods of relative prosperity it is likely that there would a fall in the percentage of brides who were heavily pregnant, as the time period required for the process of accumulation necessary for the setting up of a new household diminished.

¹⁶⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 268.

¹⁶⁸ Wrightson, "Social Context", 163-4.

¹⁶⁹ Levine and Wrightson, *Poverty*, 132.

Yet these may not have been the only elements influencing sexual activity. While there may have been a number of factors that influenced the timing of intercourse in relation to that of solemnisation, shifts in celibacy also had the potential to affect illegitimacy rates. Firstly, a considerable number of women, as money-lenders, may have had a financial in addition to a moral stake in the value of their virginity. Single women with a measure of economic security, who sought acceptance by the local community and sanction for their celibate state, would be unlikely to risk destroying their social or financial credit by engaging in morally reprehensible behaviour that could result in illegitimacy.¹⁷⁰ More significantly, however, it appears that the existing cultural proscriptions on pre-nuptial intercourse had the capacity to impact considerably on levels of illegitimacy. If the hypothesis that most women only agreed to engage in sexual intercourse within the context of marriage holds good, then the fall in the proportion of illegitimate children can be simply explained by reference to a reduction in the number of instances in which marriage was expected. This may have been the result of a greater percentage of women being unable to find a partner, or because an increased proportion had decided to remain celibate, but either way the possibility of fornication in the context of a forthcoming marriage simply never arose. It was not so much the behaviour or sexual mores of single women that underwent modification, merely the circumstances in which they found themselves.

IV. Alternative sexual practices

The discovery that the majority of single women avoided indulging in pre-nuptial intercourse, however, should not encourage historians to consign spinsters to a “resolutely unerotic” existence. In a society in which sexual reputation was fundamental to the lives of women in particular, it was not sexual activity itself that was the problem, but vaginal penetration, simply as a result of its procreative potential.¹⁷¹ And despite the strength of dominant religious and medical discourses regarding the nature and purpose of sexual activity, it is possible to identify alternative expressions of sexuality within the experiences of early modern

¹⁷⁰ The general chastity of women outside marriage is confirmed by studies which show that bastardy among widows was also unusual. See S. Stewart, “Bastardy and the family reconstitution studies of Banbury and Hartland”, in Laslett et al., eds., *Bastardy*, 129. Moreover, though writers and moralists focused on the honour of unmarried women, women who sued for slander in the London church courts were mostly married. See Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 126.

individuals that did not involve penetrative sex. Delaying marriage until their mid-twenties, for example, did not prevent young men and women from filling their teens and early twenties with a series of “highly sexualised encounters”, for references to mutual fondling are common in the surviving literature.¹⁷² Serious courting couples may have engaged extensively in what is now termed “foreplay” with the blessing of friends and family, since the case studies of Lawrence Stone reveal that amongst all social strata except the very highest, courting rituals normally allowed couples to indulge in the custom of bundling, or night visiting prior to marriage. The exact nature of what occurred on such occasions remains unclear, but nevertheless heavy petting may have formed the mainstay of many of the regular and casual sexual encounters that occurred outside the marital context.¹⁷³ Single men like John Cannon, excise officer in the making, engaged in “highly physical but non-penetrative sex” with a series of female partners, and the sexual exploits of the most notorious of all seventeenth century diarists, Samuel Pepys, reveal that even some of the married indulged in a repertoire of mutual gratification that did not involve penetration.¹⁷⁴ Church courts tended to turn a blind eye towards harmless flirtations at seasonal celebrations, judges showed little interest in any extramarital activity which did not lead to full intercourse, and single women rarely took men to court for what would now be described as sexual harassment - coarse suggestions or attempts at fondling - even if such attentions were unwanted.¹⁷⁵

In the absence of reliable contraceptive techniques full vaginal penetration may not have occupied the centrality in early modern sexual practice that dominant contemporary discourses would appear to suggest. Indeed, as Henry Abelove has argued, it is the very diversity of sexual behaviour that constitutes the hallmark of the

¹⁷¹ T. Hitchcock, *English Sexualities 1700-1800* (1997), 36.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷³ Stone, *Uncertain*, 9. The incidence and frequency of bundling - the practice of staying together all night at the woman's place of residence whether this was with or without her parents' knowledge - remains contentious. It receives no mention in contemporary moral tracts and Keith Wrightson found no trace of it in seventeenth century Lancashire and Essex. However, W.A. Champion and John Gillis have uncovered evidence of its likely existence in Shropshire and Cheshire, with Gillis in particular arguing for its widespread and perhaps most extensive occurrence during the early modern period. The fact that majority of those participating appear to have obtained sexual satisfaction without the need for full intercourse is significant - bundling was not usually associated with high levels of illegitimacy. Gillis, *For Better*, 31; W.A. Champion, “A Case of ‘Bundling’ in Late-Sixteenth Century Shropshire”, *Local Population Studies*, 35 (1985): 52; Adair, *Courtship*, 6, fn. 9; Davis and Farge, *History*, 67.

¹⁷⁴ Reay, *Popular Cultures*, 11. Pepys reserved full sexual intercourse for women who were his social inferiors. See R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850* (1998), 70, 74.

¹⁷⁵ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 240.

pre-industrial sexual landscape.¹⁷⁶ Unmarried men and women had recourse to a number of sexual alternatives such as lone or mutual masturbation, and oral and anal sex, and Quaife's assessment of the Somerset evidence has encouraged him to suggest that mutual heterosexual masturbation to the point of male ejaculation may have been the "sexual outlet for a considerable number of the lower orders prior to marriage."¹⁷⁷ Yet though a number of historians have recognised the existence of a variety of extra-marital sexual activities such as mutual manipulation that stopped short of intercourse, the implication has commonly been that such activities were of lesser sexual value than intercourse itself. As Quaife himself has indicated, "Mutual heterosexual masturbation and heavy petting, and recourse to experienced village women provide[d] the sexual outlets necessary *until such time as heterosexual coition with the village virgin became socially and economically possible.*"¹⁷⁸ Taken to its logical conclusion, this interpretation seriously problematises the nature of sexual desire among celibates in the early modern period, especially that of the females. For if demographers have correctly identified the seventeenth century as a period in which female celibacy attained its early modern highpoint, and single women did remain virgins, anything up to a quarter of the female population in the Restoration period appear to have been doomed to a lifetime of unremitting sexual frustration. Furthermore, while single men may not have laboured until quite the same restraints, bachelorhood itself remained incompatible with legitimate coition. The remainder of this chapter is then concerned to examine the extent to which the decision to remain single - and the restrictions this placed on the individual in terms of heterosexual intercourse - necessarily precluded access to sexual fulfilment.

By making the assumption that sexual desire is driven by biological directive a significant proportion of historians have interpreted the desire for heterosexual intercourse as an ahistorical phenomenon, a universal constant. That there would always have been some natural aberrations from this was clearly understood, but in general the nature of sexuality itself required little investigation because it involved "the 'natural' expression of an entirely 'natural' libido".¹⁷⁹ More recent histories of homosexuality and the body, combined with the profound and enduring influence of

¹⁷⁶ H. Ablove, "Some Speculations on the History of Sexual Intercourse during the Long Eighteenth Century in England", *Genders*, 6 (1989): 129.

¹⁷⁷ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, 246.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 247 (my emphasis).

¹⁷⁹ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 4.

Michel Foucault, have challenged the basis of this understanding. The ideology of heterosexuality as the norm, as the basis of self-identity, began its rise to prominence in the literature of the eighteenth century. Prior to this date alternative sexualities in the form of masturbation and homosexual behaviour, while undoubtedly sinful, were not a critical aspect of the individual persona - sexual behaviour could be directed towards a range of people and objects, for all sin formed part of a “continuum of transgressions of which each individual man and woman necessarily partook”. Within this “amorphous set of sexual categories” the opportunities for lifelong celibates to attain sexual fulfilment would then have been much greater than traditional interpretations have hitherto implied.¹⁸⁰

In looking first at masturbation, Roy Porter has suggested that it was generally assumed to be a sin committed by single men and single women, although it is male diaries and autobiographies that offer most anecdotal evidence of its practice.¹⁸¹ The memoirs of John Cannon, for example, indicate that he first learned to masturbate in 1696 at the age of twelve under the instruction of a seventeen-year old school friend, and continued to do so throughout the period of his adolescence, using contemporary texts to aid his pleasure. *Aristotles Master-piece* and Nicholas Culpeper’s text on midwifery were his point of entry into the “secrets of nature” until his mother, apprehending him in the act of masturbating with the latter, swiftly removed it.¹⁸² For protestant efforts to raise the value of sexual intercourse within marriage did not extend towards any accepted participation in self-induced erotic pleasure. On the contrary, in attempting to create a norm of heterosexual intercourse within solemnised marriage, early modern conduct writers felt duty bound to vilify all other forms of sexual activity. Thus Richard Allestree, well-known author and seventeenth century divine, exhorted all men and women to observe the “vertue of chastity”, which he indicated “consists in a perfect abstaining from all kinds of uncleanness, not only that of Adultery, and Fornication, but all other more unnatural sorts of it committed either upon our selves, or with any other”.¹⁸³ Much of the christian doctrine on the subject of masturbation had been heavily influenced by the views of the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas, whose forthright opinion characterised it as particularly iniquitous: “provoking pollution without any carnal union to obtain sensuous pleasure is a sin

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸¹ Porter, “Sexual Advice”, 140.

¹⁸² Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 29.

against nature”.¹⁸⁴ Indeed sound theological and medical reasons were brought together to bear on the case for its avoidance: not only did the practice damage procreative potential by wasting precious seed, but in addition it was thought to have engendered sickly and weakened offspring because of an over-indulgence in sexual activity.¹⁸⁵

Nevertheless, despite this moral denunciation, the practice of masturbation may have enjoyed a considerable amount of toleration prior to the eighteenth century. Religious doctrine was unswerving in its condemnation of the practice of self-manipulation, but that of medicine was considerably more fractured. For while continental moralists rejected the assertion that “it could be permitted to use the hand and the repeated strokes to expel a corrupted and poisonous seed, with the aim of improving the health”, a number of Tudor and Stuart physicians continued to prescribe masturbation as a treatment for the accumulation of seminal fluid.¹⁸⁶ Medical constructions of sexuality, unlike their religious counterparts, did not seek to reinforce the sinfulness of sexual activity outside marriage, for the writings of Aristotle and other classicists, from which much of the early modern physiological knowledge continued to be drawn, had characterised sexual desire as a normal and natural manifestation of the human appetite. Moreover, being involuntary, sexual desire - and its concomitant erection in the male of the species - should not be criticised or subject to moral blame.¹⁸⁷ Regular orgasm was therefore understood primarily in terms of physical necessity as opposed to personal indulgence: “Chaste men do not use venereal pleasures for their enjoyment”, Galen had suggested, “but solely to cure an ailment, as if in reality they experience no enjoyment at all.”¹⁸⁸ Thus in the late sixteenth century Martin Akakia, in urging his male readers to heed the advice of Aristotle, recommended that men over the age of fifty-five “abandon all thought of procreation and henceforth practise sex for reasons of health or some other cause: such as for instance to relieve themselves of a build-up of seminal fluid.”¹⁸⁹ In the writings of Thomas Cogan too, published at around the same time, “moderate

¹⁸³ R. Allestree, *The works of the learned and pious author of The Whole Duty of Man* (1684), 64.

¹⁸⁴ Cited in C. Pinto-Correia, *The Ovary of Eve. Egg and Sperm Preformation* (1997), 81.

¹⁸⁵ Theologian Thomas Cartwright and physicians J. Hart and J. Sadler were among those who entertained such views. See Crawford, “Sexual Knowledge”, 88.

¹⁸⁶ Pinto-Correia, *Ovary*, 85; Crawford, “Sexual”, 90.

¹⁸⁷ Fletcher, *Gender*, 53.

¹⁸⁸ Pinto-Correia, *Ovary*, 86, fn.29.

¹⁸⁹ Marton Akakia, “On women’s illnesses”, from J. Spachius, ed., *Gynacea* (1597), in Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman*, 51.

evacuation” took the form of a general and effective panacea, recommended, among other reasons, because it “stireth up the witte, reviveth the senses, driveth away sadnesse, madnesse, anger, melancholie, furie. Finally, it delivereth us utterlie from lecherous imaginations and unchaste dreams”.¹⁹⁰ By the following century, the failure to ejaculate accumulated sperm, in the view of the royal physician John Archer, may even have pre-disposed the individual in question to venereal disease. Thus Archer’s popular medical text of 1671 outlined his considered opinion that “too great fullness of seed” served to “imbecile the Retentive Faculty of the Spermatick Vessels”, giving rise, in all probablilty, to gonorrhoea or the “Running of the Reins”.¹⁹¹ Though the “spilling” of seed took on increased significance in elite medical circles as a result of the ovist-spermist debate on preformation, popular understandings of the need for regular evacuation continued to enjoy widespread acceptance.¹⁹²

Significantly, the advice on evacuation was not gender specific, for women - as indicated in Chapter Two - were also encouraged to orgasm regularly in order to expel their excess seed. Moreover, as early as 1583, Philip Barrough’s understanding that failure on the part of the woman to orgasm contributed significantly to the onset of the condition known as “suffocation or strangling of the wombe”, occasioned him to recommend the use of manipulative techniques in order to ease the problem.¹⁹³ Midwives, according to his advice, were required to dip their fingers into “odiferous” oils “and then put them into the mouth of the matrix [womb], rubbing it, long and easilie, that through that provoking, the grosse and clammy humour may be avoided out”.¹⁹⁴ Medical authorisation of manual manipulation for women does not appear to have presented a conscious or implied subtext for female pleasure - such pleasure was understood to have derived principally from penetrative intercourse - but there are indications by the later seventeenth century that some women recognised the pleasurable possibilities of masturbation. The physician J. McMath, for example, railed against “Lascivious Virgins, and Widows wholly intent to Lustful Cogitations” who were involved in “wantonly rubbing” their breasts, and the author of the early eighteenth century *Onania: or, the Heinous Sin of Self Pollution* claimed to have been

¹⁹⁰ Cogan, *Haven*, 247.

¹⁹¹ John Archer, *Every Man his Own Doctor. In Two Parts* (1671), 125.

¹⁹² Since spermists believed each sperm contained an embryonic human, deliberate wastage bordered on murder. See Pinto-Correia, *Ovary*, esp. ch. 6.

¹⁹³ P. Barrough, *The Methode of Phisicke* (1583), 150.

reliably informed that masturbation was as common among girls as it was among boys; the latter also included a cursory reference to women who masturbated with dildos.¹⁹⁵ The later *Supplement to Onania* claimed that girls had been prompted to masturbate by a reading of the late seventeenth century publication *Aristotle's Masterpiece* which mentioned that women could give themselves an amazing sensation “cum Digitis, vel aliiis Instrumentis” (with fingers or other instruments).¹⁹⁶ Popular misogynist literature, however, refused to recognise masturbation as a viable alternative to sexual intercourse:

Lap-Dogs and Dildos serve as much to cure
Their customary raging Calenture,
As Men in Fevers when they drink small Beer,
Which makes the Fit return but more severe.
All the endeavours for to quench desire,
Serve only to promote the hidden Fire.¹⁹⁷

Once again women themselves remain largely silent on the matter. A particularly high profile case suggests self-manipulation was known to have existed among the upper status groups, for Henry Killigrew junior was apparently banished from the court of Charles II for speculating about the youthful masturbation of Lady Castelmaine, the king's influential mistress.¹⁹⁸ However, while masturbation may have been a more widespread feature of female experience than records indicate - the Cassell Dictionary of Sex Quotations, for example, claims Elizabeth I characterised the practice as “the bulwark of virginity” - nevertheless popular attitudes of women towards, and indulgence in, masturbatory practices remains largely a matter for the historical imagination.¹⁹⁹

The final expression of sexual behaviour to undergo investigation in this section is that of homosexuality. It must be said, however, that while evidencing any form of sexual behaviour and the attitudes towards it in both the past and the present

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹⁹⁵ J. McMath, *The expert midwife* (1694), 31-2; Laurence, *Women*, 68; R. Porter and L. Hall, *The Facts of Life. The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950* (1995), 99.

¹⁹⁶ Cited in E. Donoghue, *Passions Between Women. British lesbian culture 1668-1801* (1993), 44.

¹⁹⁷ [R. Ames], *The Folly of Love. A New Satyr Against Woman* (1700), 8.

¹⁹⁸ Turner, “Pepys”, 103-4.

¹⁹⁹ *Cassell Dictionary of Sex Quotations* (1993), 145.

is problematic, researching levels of homosexual behaviour as far back as the seventeenth century proves to be particularly difficult. The concept of a homosexual identity in early modern England is entirely anachronistic. A man or woman who had sexual relationships with others of the same gender would not necessarily have considered themselves to be fundamentally different from their peers, since personal proclivities did not offer the same basis for self-definition they have acquired in modern sexual discourse. Neither would contemporary society have required them so to do. Homosexual behaviour constituted merely one form of a number of activities defined as illicit, but understood crucially in terms of sexual excess rather than difference: the classic image of the seventeenth century libertine as one who had “a catamite on one arm and a whore on the other” neatly sums up the extent to which early modern sexuality was multifaceted.²⁰⁰

However, this should not imply that homosexual activity was openly condoned. On the contrary, both religious teaching and legal statute sought to place restrictions on such behaviour. Thus christian doctrine proselytised at length on the sinful nature of non-procreative sex and secular legislation designated homosexual behaviour a felony without benefit of clergy - those found guilty of this particular form of illicit behaviour were sentenced to the scaffold. Yet historians of homosexuality have sought to represent early modern English culture in terms of two conflicting images, the one homophobic, the other homophobic. Through concentrating his efforts on the moral denunciation and legal repression of homosexual behaviour, Alan Bray has suggested the former is more likely; B.R. Burg on the other hand has pointed out that the laxity with which these laws were enforced is indicative at least of tolerance, if not predisposition towards such behaviour.²⁰¹ Neither, however, have suggested it was in any way a minority activity.

Sodomy, or buggery - the offence with which those accused of homosexual activities were most commonly charged - had been an ecclesiastical offence from at least the medieval period. It first became a civil crime in 1533, and by 1562 had become a criminal offence; thus cases could be tried at Quarter Sessions or the Assizes, and those convicted of the deed were subject to death by hanging. The charge itself covered a broad range of illicit sexual activity but generally included

²⁰⁰ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 65.

²⁰¹ A. Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (1982), 13-32; cited in B.R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (1982), 73.

some form of penetration: anal penetration of man or woman, bestiality, child molesting and fellatio all fell under the umbrella of sodomy, as did sexual activity between women which included the use of a dildo.²⁰² Sir Edward Coke's legal definition in the seventeenth century was suitably antagonistic and predictably phallogocentric:

Buggery is a detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named, committed by carnal knowledge against the ordinance of the Creator and order of nature, by mankind with mankind, or with brute beast, or by womankind with brute beast.²⁰³

Yet despite the abhorrence suggested by the legal and moral pronouncements, use of the charge was rare, and conviction even rarer, since for sodomy to be proven two witnesses were required to give evidence of both penetration and ejaculation.²⁰⁴ Accordingly, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, only six men in the Home Counties were indicted and only one convicted of illicit homosexual behaviour, although the figures were higher for bestiality.²⁰⁵ Moreover, analysis of high profile sodomy cases has questioned the extent to which charges of sodomy were principally directed by a desire to punish deviant sexual behaviour. Sodomy appears to have been embedded in a number of other discourses that delineated antisocial activity, for it "sent the mind spinning toward heterodoxies of all sorts: sorcery, religious heresy, treason."²⁰⁶

The two most famous sodomy trials of the seventeenth century, involving the Earl of Castlehaven in 1631 and Bishop Atherton in 1640, can be analysed almost entirely in political and religious terms.²⁰⁷ The Earl of Castlehaven was brought to trial on the basis of three charges: sodomy with two of his male servants and inciting one of those to rape his wife. His servants denied anything more than inter-crural masturbation, but he was convicted of abetting the rape of his own wife, a far more heinous act since it provided evidence of a self confessed attempt to provide a bastard

²⁰² Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 61.

²⁰³ Sir Edward Coke, *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England*, third edition (1660), 58.

²⁰⁴ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 60.

²⁰⁵ Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 48. Roland Dyer of Margate was convicted and sentenced to hang in July 1569 for sodomizing Barnaby Wright, who was only five years old at the time.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰⁷ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 66.

heir.²⁰⁸ John Atherton, Anglican Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, suffered similar accusations of sodomy (and was subsequently hanged), the subject of his attentions being his proctor, John Childe. His real crime, however, appears to have been the extent of his political allegiance to the Earl of Strafford, who had forced leading landowners to surrender portions of their estate in Ireland.²⁰⁹ Examinations of court records involving accusations of homosexual behaviour that were less high profile in nature prove to be similarly disconcerting. The fact that there was commonly a status difference between offender and accuser (masters and servants, or teachers and pupils for example) merely focuses increased attention on the role rather than the extent of sodomy accusations in the early modern period.

Sodomites may then have remained largely invisible so long as those involved in homosexual behaviour were not connected with the more visible signs of social disruption represented by unorthodox religious or social stances. Yet homosexual activity was clearly in evidence. Male prostitution was not only present in early modern London, but may even have been thriving. John Marston's satire *Scourge of Villanie* condemned male "stews" in 1598 and Clement Walker (*Relations and Observations*) mentioned the appearance of several new homosexual brothels in London late in 1649.²¹⁰ In addition, Philip Stubbes charged the Elizabethan theatre with providing a cover for sodomitical behaviour, and satirists disparaged the London gentry for their participation in such acts.²¹¹ The libertine behaviour of the elite is relatively well documented and homosexual behaviour may not have been uncommon among the gentry: Lucy Hutchinson claimed her husband John, who had received "continuall licitations to sin and lewdness" from the son of Sir Thomas Grantham, had nevertheless been spared "by the grace of God ... from wallowing in the mire of sin and wickednesse wherein most of the gentry of those times were miserably plunged".²¹²

Despite evidence of homosexual behaviour in the army and navy, however, examples of consensual sex lower down the social scale are rare, rendering the full

²⁰⁸ Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 52.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Bray, *Homosexuality*, 53.

²¹¹ Ibid., 35.

²¹² L. Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. J. Sutherland (Oxford, 1973), 23, 35. Colonel John Hutchinson was born in 1615; his schooling took place between 1625 and 1632, first at Nottingham, and then Lincoln. This incident occurred while he was at school at Lincoln, probably in his mid to later teens.

extent of such activity amongst the general male population largely irretrievable.²¹³ Nevertheless Alan Bray has proposed that the educational system may have involved institutionalised forms of homosexual behaviour, not just at university level but also in grammar schools and even in village establishments.²¹⁴ Moreover, since the household system placed severe limitations on the sexual opportunities of the individual, homosexual as opposed to heterosexual behaviour may have offered distinct advantages for unmarried servants. The common practice of male servants sleeping together made homosexual activity accessible, and while sodomy cases were few, the records of the courts of church and state point up the fact that interest in premarital fornication was high.²¹⁵

Furthermore, levels of homosexual activity were heavily disguised by the existence of a peculiarly ambivalent attitude towards intimacy between men in sixteenth and seventeenth century England: male friendship was idealised and sought after, and its loss at marriage publicly mourned in a variety of literary mediums.²¹⁶ In a culture in which it was acceptable for men to express open affection for one another without the slightest hint of effeminacy, the all male power structure tended to foster manly bonds to the exclusion of all others. Given the intense homosocial atmosphere of the early modern period, and the political context of sodomy accusations it is not only possible but probable that recorded cases of homosexual behaviour seriously underestimate the extent of their incidence. Indeed Alan Bray has indicated that not only was such behaviour widespread in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, but in addition that the population at large were aware of its existence. A reluctance to define it, however, allowed men to dissociate the personal facts of homosexuality from the social sanctions against it, thereby resolving what he has described as the “fundamental incompatibility between English society’s uncompromising rejection of homosexuality and the hard and stony fact of its existence”.²¹⁷

The world of female friendship, if anything, proves even more impervious to the systems of historical investigation. Historians have largely been willing to accept that single men (and the married) had recourse to homosexual activity, but texts

²¹³ Shoemaker, *Gender*, 80.

²¹⁴ Bray, *Homosexuality*, 52.

²¹⁵ In addition, none of the cases of slander examined by Laura Gowing between 1600 and 1640 featured any allegations of homosexual behaviour. Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 65.

²¹⁶ Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 56, 72-3.

²¹⁷ Bray, *Homosexuality*, 76, 9.

remain largely silent on the subject of lesbian behaviour.²¹⁸ Katherine Philips' poetry had been described as "closet" lesbian verse, and the mutual letters of Constantia Fowler and Catherine Thimelby in the 1630s are ambiguous enough to imply sexual passion, but the difficulty in interpreting concepts of love articulated within contemporary literature has encouraged historians to adopt the terminology of "romantic friendship" to define all-female relationships and leave the final decision to the reader.²¹⁹ Moreover, in contrast to almost every other west European state by 1540, English law had no statute specifically criminalizing erotic acts between women.²²⁰ Consequently court evidence of lesbian activity is extremely scarce, and it is not until the Restoration period that there is any evidence of a willingness among contemporaries to broach the subject. But while there are muted references to lesbian behaviour in the works of the Duchess of Newcastle and also that of Aphra Behn, much of the curiosity about female homosexuality arose in response to the greater desire of men for erotic literature: lesbian activity had always been a voyeuristic topic in pornographic and semi-pornographic works for men, especially those from France, where the convent remained synonymous with titillating forms of female sexuality.²²¹

In the event, however, the discourse most active in raising the profile of lesbian behaviour in the later seventeenth century was that of medicine. Since male physicians appear to have been largely incapable of decoupling female sexual enjoyment from penetration, the medical model of same-sex female relationships had at its centre the female hermaphrodite or tribade, whose enlarged clitoris or prolapsed vagina, masquerading as a substitute penis, could be used to rub another woman's vulva, or even penetrate it when aroused.²²² Physical abnormality was recognised by men to have been a significant factor in determining the nature of female sexual activity. In 1693, for example, Ralph Hollingsworth claimed that Susannah Belling had been no true wife to him: "she knowing her infirmity ought not have married; her infirmity is such that no man Can Lye with her, & because it is so she has wayes with women ... w[hi]ch is not fit to be named but most Ranke whoreish they are".²²³ Unfortunately this medical model functioned to deny the ordinariness of lesbian

²¹⁸ Though strictly speaking the use of the term "lesbian" is anachronistic, it has been employed in this context to improve style.

²¹⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 242-6.

²²⁰ V. Traub, "The Rewards of Lesbian History", *Feminist Studies*, 25 (1999), 388.

²²¹ J. Todd, *The Sign of Angellica, Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (1989), 30.

²²² Donoghue, *Passions*, 27.

²²³ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 78.

activity by situating it within the more unusual context of physical abnormality, and in the process served to perpetuate the myth that all “normal” women had exclusive heterosexual tendencies. Though historians of lesbianism such as Emma Donoghue have attempted to reveal the full extent of early modern lesbian activity, by positing the existence of a lesbian continuum that stretched from non-sexual female friendship through a variety of sexual relationships (bisexuality, mutual masturbation, and group and couple activity) to those who adopted explicitly masculine roles through cross-dressing and the use of dildos, the incidence of lesbian activity remains clouded by the unwillingness of contemporaries to recognise and describe it as such.²²⁴

V. Summary

Discussions of sexual attitudes and behaviour in any historical era are fraught with difficulty. The strength of contemporary public morality, the paucity and questionable nature of source material and the blinkered views of historians all conspire to add bias to interpretations that are already clouded by intimate and personal understandings of human sexuality. In this sphere, therefore, more than any other, it is perhaps impossible to reflect with any objective credibility on the attitudes and behaviours of our predecessors. Yet in order to release the libido of the early modern celibate from its sexual straightjacket, it seems inappropriate not to try.

There is no doubt that during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, discussions of sexuality sought to locate all sexual activity within a pro-nuptial and increasingly pro-natalist agenda. The marriage discourse, while raising the value of sexual intercourse within the context of solemnised marriage, functioned contemporaneously to limit access to such activity to those who had chosen to enter marriage. There were of course those who engaged in intercourse outside the bonds of matrimony: predatory sexual encounters of a violent and non-violent nature are present in the historical record, as are casual relationships and more long term examples of cohabitation. In addition, the full extent of ante-nuptial intercourse can never be adequately recovered, since the shadowy presence of contraception, abortion and infanticide continues to cloud the picture. Nevertheless, on the basis of current evidence, the discourse of marriage appears to have enjoyed considerable success. The majority of those who indulged in intercourse prior to solemnisation appear to

²²⁴ Donoghue, *Passions*, 1-24.

have done so on the expectation that marriage would follow, and those who found themselves permanently outside the marital estate, more especially if they were female, therefore understood that their access to heterosexual intercourse was considerably restricted.

The discourse operated to suppress fornication through a number of mediums. Ingram and Stone, though approaching the problem from different angles, have presented a view of Tudor and Stuart society as heavily influenced by the strictures of religion. Addy and Quaipe, on the other hand, have offered a picture of a seventeenth century peasantry comprised almost entirely of “lusty laddes whose lecherous lust their wanton ladyes fele”.²²⁵ Largely unfettered by religious doctrine, the prime concerns of this peasantry were more frequently determined by community economics than public morality. Yet if economic ideas, as Ingram has indicated, “were suffused with moral values and conceived in ethical terms”, these two contrasting theories should be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing elements of a more overarching mechanism of discursive control that was fuelled by moral and economic pressures, disseminated by public accusation and social sanction, but directed in the final instance by the need to retain personal credit and honour.²²⁶ Moreover, the fact that the need to retain honour circumscribed sexual activity among single women to a far greater extent than it did among their male counterparts had significant ramifications in the sphere of illegitimacy. Though the steady decline in the bastardy rates may in part be explained by changes in the legitimacy of marriage formation, and in part by a fall in the number of women who employed sexual intercourse as part of an economic survival strategy, the fact that an increasing number either decided against marriage or failed to find a partner appears to have been the most instrumental factor in the retention of their virginity - they simply never entered the procreative arena.

The discovery that procreative sexuality could not be decoupled from moral and economic constraints, however, should not encourage the historian to view restraint from intercourse as evidence of extensive sexual frustration. Accounts of mutual masturbation and examples of alternative erotic practices indicate that satisfaction outside the context of vaginal penetration was not beyond the bounds of

²²⁵ Cited in Adair, *Courtship*, 131.

²²⁶ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 160.

individual experience in seventeenth century England.²²⁷ Though in theory self-manipulation and homosexual behaviour were subject to ecclesiastical censure, a factor that may account for their relative absence in documentary sources, in practice, social attitudes may have been relatively relaxed: the functional approach to sexual release offered by contemporary medical literature ensured that the individual fulfilment of sexual desire was not only perceived as necessary, but may in addition have received some validation. During much of the seventeenth century the discourses of marriage, medicine and sexuality appear primarily concerned with the repression of procreative intercourse outside the marital estate. There are indications that the emphasis had begun to change by the end of the period as the pro-natalist agenda focussed increasing attention on the productive role of sexual activity, a factor that may help account for the growing condemnation of masturbation and the identification of the homosexual that was to characterise the literature of the eighteenth century. As a result, what had passed for acceptable sexual practice outside of marriage during the seventeenth century, from the eighteenth century onwards became construed essentially as foreplay in all sexual relationships.²²⁸

In the view of Bruce Smith, “Sex is one of the constants in human experience; sexuality, one of the variables. Sexual desire animates human beings in all times and all places, but the forms that desire assumes, the objects to which desire is directed, change from culture to culture, from era to era.”²²⁹ In the Tudor and Stuart periods, economic and social constraints on marriage opportunities, in combination with changing views on celibacy, functioned to raise the proportion of those who found themselves permanently outside the estate of marriage to new heights. Since the marriage discourse defined licit sexuality as heterosexual, penetrative and located exclusively within the bonds of matrimony, for individuals outside this paradigm the possibility of intercourse became greatly circumscribed. Single men could indulge in extra-marital intercourse with some degree of freedom, but a considerable number, especially those living in homosocial organisations, may have visualised sodomy and masturbation as acceptable alternatives to more orthodox sexual activities.²³⁰ More importantly, however, popular physiological understandings of sexuality may have

²²⁷ Edward Shorter has suggested that it was unlikely that masturbation was practised “on a wide scale before the pre-marital sexual revolution” since it was rarely mentioned before 1650 in non-clerical sources. Shorter, *Modern Family*, 99.

²²⁸ Abelove, “Speculations”, 129.

²²⁹ Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 3.

functioned to allow single women to satisfy their erotic impulses. Constrained by an age in which contraception was rudimentary and unreliable, and relationships were defined by their proximity to marriage, it is not difficult to see single women keeping men in general at a safe distance, preferring to attain sexual release by recourse to masturbation or homosexual encounter rather than involve themselves in heterosexual activities that could imply a desire for intercourse. But though lifelong celibacy, which functioned to permanently debar a considerable number of Tudor and Stuart women from the pleasures of the marriage bed, may tend to arouse modern sympathies, such emotion may well be misplaced - alternative means of sexual satisfaction were not only accessible but possible within the context of contradictory discursive understandings. Moreover, the extent to which these less orthodox alternatives provided a physically safer and socially more acceptable outlet for sexual desire should not be discounted.²³¹ Unmarried virgins in the early modern period may not have suffered the same obsession with phallic sexuality implicit in both modern and contemporary male narratives.

²³⁰ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 64.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

Chapter Five

Celibacy in context

When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.¹

A perpetual Celibacy was never esteemed in the world. At all times it has been regarded as a thing disgraceful to mankind.²

A single Woman makes a sad Figure in the world. She wants the shadow of a Husband to protect her from Misery, Seduction or Calumny.³

Having linked the sexual continence of the Tudor and Stuart periods to the strength of the marital discourse in the penultimate chapter, the final chapter seeks to highlight the effectiveness of the discourse in defining the nature of single existence in seventeenth century England. For the dominant construction of celibacy in the Tudor and Stuart periods revolved around the idea of singleness as a temporary stage in the life cycle process. Remaining permanently unmarried was acceptable under a number of exceptional circumstances - as Chapter Two indicated - but in all other cases entry into marriage was expected of every individual at some point in their adult life, even if, as the quote from Shakespeare's most celebrated reluctant husband suggests, this was not a pressing concern. The effect of this construction was dramatic. The understanding that a period of adolescence would inevitably be followed by entry into marriage served to shape the contours of economic and social practice along sharply demarcated lines of gender, in which women, as a group, were severely disadvantaged. By the later seventeenth century, however, the notion of lifecycle celibacy as a near-universal experience appears to have undergone considerable qualification. There had been an understanding for some time that celibacy in the service of God constituted an acceptable category of marital default, but the articulation of lifelong singleness in the *civic* sphere as a product of self-

¹ W. Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 2.3.242-3.

² Anon., *The Batchelors Directory* (1694), 58.

³ *Ibid.*, Advertisement.

determination, first visible in the republican thought of the pre-war period, and followed up during the Restoration in a number of proto-feminist writings, served to redefine the limits of celibate existence. As a result, the concept of lifecycle singleness, which had informed the economic, social and cultural basis of Tudor and Stuart society, no longer enjoyed an overarching validity. More disturbing from a contemporary viewpoint, however, was the understanding that the articulation of female celibacy was accompanied by a rise in the number of permanently single women, who in addition enjoyed access to increasing economic and social autonomy. Social commentators were divided over the nature of the factors responsible for eliciting such a rise, but the mere fact of its existence appears to have constituted a major source of male concern - the later seventeenth century witnessed the development of a range of literary attacks on the idea of the single woman designed to facilitate her cultural exclusion from early modern society.

I. Celibacy as a lifecycle phenomenon

In the hierarchical system that characterised early modern society, each member had an appropriate role to play dependent upon age, gender, and marital (and social) status. Celibacy therefore appears in the literature primarily as a period between adolescence and marriage, during which young singles were allowed “a measure of irresponsibility before they took on the serious duties of householders and assumed full membership of church and commonwealth”.⁴ According to at least one seventeenth century balladeer,

The bachelor most joyfullye
In pleasant plight doth pass his daies,
Good fellowship and companie
He doth maintaine and kepe alwaie(s).⁵

For spinsters too, the single life was defined as a blissful time, devoid of care and concern:

⁴ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 354.

⁵ “In Praise of the Joyful Life of a Bachelor”, in W. C. Hazlitt, ed., *Ancient Songs and Ballads collected by J Ritton Esq.*, third edition (1877), 165.

Virginity, is life of chaste respect,
No worldly burden thereupon is layd:
Our syngle life, all peace and quiet bringes,
And we are free from carefull earthly things.⁶

Consequently, the working year was regularly interrupted by feasts and holidays. Shrovetide was associated with games, contests and cockfights, and May Day with maypoles, games and revels, and both were primarily the festivals of the unmarried. Hiring fairs, too, provided opportunities for maids and youths from diverse geographical locations to enjoy the delights of drinking and dancing in addition to a selection of competitive sports and games.⁷ Away from seasonal celebrations, singles appear to have been no less disposed to indulge in a range of localised activities, many of which were impromptu in nature. Thus John Aubrey provided examples of sports played by “young wenches” and “mayds” often after supper, the majority of which were designed to match one of them with a suitable young bachelor, while William Lilly remembered that a hundred or more young lads from several London parishes would meet up in the Strand after a day’s work, remaining there until it grew dark, “some playing, others as if in serious discourse”.⁸ The alehouse too had a prominent place in the bachelor’s social round, with young men like Roger Lowe often spending their free time out all night in the local hostelry mixing fellowship and drink with games of backgammon, cards and dice.⁹

Though female leisure, according to Bernard Capp, was less elaborate than its male equivalent, certain customs that were gender specific allowed single women a number of opportunities for recreation. Some were calendar based - maids wassailed at Christmas, for example, and London milkmaids danced through the streets at Easter - but spinsters, like their male counterparts, could also demonstrate spontaneity in their desire to indulge their sense of fun. Four young women were presented in 1638 at Wisbech, for example, for “sporting at the bowling green in time of divine service” and in Somerset in 1649 a village girl took malt to her local brewer requesting it be made into beer, for “she together with some other maidens of her acquaintance had a

⁶ Rowlands, *Bride*, sig. B.

⁷ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 192.

⁸ Griffiths, *Youth*, 211; *ibid.*, 134.

⁹ Sachse ed., *Roger Lowe*, 7, 8, 14, 21. Roger himself does not appear to have played card games, but he did indulge in bowls. *Ibid.*, 7, 33.

desire to be merry together”.¹⁰ Moreover, the return of the monarch in 1660 appears to have presented at least one group of maidens with a unique opportunity for revelry. The day after Charles II had landed at Dover a crowd of young women in the small Gloucester clothing town of Dursley spent the day in dancing and celebration, ordering that “whosoever should detain either daughter or maid-servant from their solemnity” should be fined a shilling. After choosing a “captain”, and marching in procession to the top of Stinchcombe Hill carrying beech boughs, they proceeded to drink the health of the king on their knees.¹¹

Drinking in licensed establishments, however, was uncommon among single females, for those who entered alehouses alone risked being labelled as whores.¹² Unmarried women who were courting might attend with their boyfriends, often in the company of other couples, but whether they were single, married, or widowed, women ventured into the alehouse more typically to participate in a number of ritual celebrations (e.g., marriages, christenings or churchings).¹³ Their leisure time was more likely to have been spent in calling on friends or relatives at their place of residence, with contact outside the household being reserved to the workplace, marketplace or church. For work and leisure were not always rigidly demarcated. After spending a hot summer’s day in reading and working at home, Dorothy Osborne walked out at about six or seven in the evening to a common near her house, “where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads”.¹⁴

Though single people as individuals experienced a range of cultural experiences dependent upon their wealth, status and gender, in keeping with the marriage discourse, public recognition of celibacy accentuated age hierarchies above all else. Definitions of young people and single people were often interchangeable, and the use of one was often taken to imply the other. In legal terms especially, the concepts of youth and celibacy were visibly connected. The Statute of Artificers, which had at its root the desire to curb “the unadvised rashness and licentious manner

¹⁰ B. Capp, “Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England”, in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (hereafter Griffiths et al.), eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (1996), 130-1; Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches*, 66-7.

¹¹ D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion Popular Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985), 273.

¹² Griffiths, *Youth*, 209.

¹³ P. Clark, *The English Alehouse. A Social History 1200-1830* (1983), 131.

¹⁴ Parry, ed., *Dorothy Osborne*, 103.

of youth”, laid down restrictions on the activities of both the young and the single to the effect that “every person being unmarried, and every other person being under thage of thirtie yeres, that after the Feaste of Easter next shall marrye” came within its remit.¹⁵ Indeed one vital aspect of the popular expression of age-relations, according to Paul Griffiths, was “the distance between the married and unmarried members of a community”, a distance that was reinforced in the public arena by sporting events arranged between wives and spinsters or maids, and between husbands and bachelors.¹⁶

This may have served to foster a sense of cultural unity amongst celibates at large, and anecdotal evidence suggests that singles as a group sought out each other’s company regardless of age. Mary Cork, twenty-six, and Johanna Robinson, forty-one, for example, were friends and drinking companions of Mary Barrow “of some yeres”, to whom they were happy to lend fellowship and support.¹⁷ Yet single people were not excluded from contact with married adults even in their youth, despite the fact that their public image tended to limit their involvement to a role commensurate with their age, rank and marital status. Young bachelors, in particular, were likely to find themselves in the company of married men in the course of their employment, and while the alehouse provided them with an opportunity to escape the demands of their masters, it also allowed them to socialise with older men on more equal terms.¹⁸ Moreover, though popular representations of male friendship suggested the need for a parting of the ways after marriage, the letters of Sir Richard Wynn, a Caernarfonshire baronet, reveal his ongoing friendships with both married and single men after he had renounced his bachelor status, though the former appear to have been the more numerous.¹⁹ William Stout, the Lancashire grocer and Quaker, also had a varied social circle which included a number of married and single companions. Richard Green, his “intimat friend and sociable companion” was almost certainly of bachelor status, but others mentioned in Stout’s autobiography like Joshua Wilson, with whom he stayed in London, and his “very good friend and neighbour” Augustin Green, were both married.²⁰

¹⁵ R.H. Tawney and E. Power, *Tudor Economic Documents, Volume 1* (1924), 339.

¹⁶ Griffiths, *Youth*, 26, 117.

¹⁷ O’Hara, *Courtship*, 163.

¹⁸ Clark, *Alehouse*, 148.

¹⁹ K.W. Swett, “‘The Account Between Us’: Honor, Reciprocity and Companionship in Male Friendship in the Later Seventeenth Century”, *Albion*, 31 (1999): 4, 6.

²⁰ Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 140, 147, 132.

Women too appear to have been capable of sustaining friendships across the marriage divide, for Jane Owen of Gloverstone in Cheshire left the residue of her estate to her “loving friend Margaret Collins, widow”, and Priscilla Jellos, of Lincolnshire, her “best band but one” to the wife of Mathew Harrison.²¹ Nevertheless the social separation of married women from their single counterparts was more heavily drawn than that of husbands from bachelors, and attempts to intensify it during the seventeenth century appear as a feature of the marital discourse. Thus the message of social separation offered in popular literature - in Samuel Rowlands’ ballad *The Bride*, for example, the company of virgin bridesmaids bemoaned the segregation of single and married women - was reinforced by the process of physical separation that became increasingly characteristic of seventeenth century ecclesiastical procedure.²² As the numbers of parishioners expanded, the need to accommodate a growing church population encouraged diocesan officials in some areas to authorise churchwardens to reseat entire congregations “according to ranks, qualities and conditions”.²³ Accordingly, sources in Norfolk refer not only to those church pews that were reserved for married women, but also to those provided expressly for the single women in the community, clearly identified as the “men’s daughter’s seats” and the “maids stoole”.²⁴ The system, however, did not always operate successfully. Though Chapter Two indicated that church seating arrangements were symbolic of the status differential between single and married women, and one that communities sought to uphold, they were also a source of conflict. Mary Hartley, for example, refused to be seated in her allocated pew, preferring instead to sit “among the maides very undecently being a maryed wife”, and the insistence of Elizabeth Carder of Abington Magna that she vacate her seat among the wives to sit “in the maides stoole” effectively disrupted the whole of the service: Margery Amye, singlewoman, having been prevented from taking up her proper place, decided to “contend and strike” for her seat.²⁵

²¹ C.R.O. WS 1700, Jane Owen; L.A.O. LCC WILLS 1632/200, Priscilla Jellos.

²² According to the maids in Rowlands’ ballad, the bride scorned them after her marriage on account of her superior social status: “no longer than the wedding day, You hould with us, but turne to tother side: Boasting of honour you assend unto, And so goe forward making much adoe.” Rowlands, *Bride*, sig. B

²³ Underdown, *Revel*, 33.

²⁴ Griffiths, *Youth*, 108.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

II. Celibacy and economic opportunity

The notion of celibacy as a temporary facet of an integrated social system was derived almost exclusively from contemporary understandings of proper gender roles, in which adult men were constructed as husbands, fathers and heads of households - the primary political and economic actors - while adult women appeared almost exclusively in the roles of wives and mothers, playing a subordinate and largely domestic role. Celibacy, constructed as the interval of time between adolescence and marriage, was then widely recognised as a preparative period in which individuals acquired the skills necessary for full participation in the adult world of work, marriage and parental responsibility. But while it was understood that youths should receive training from the age of fourteen until marriage in a trade or calling appropriate to their wealth and status, the skills girls needed to develop were not ranged around the concept of an occupational career, but instead designed to compliment a marital one: conduct writers typically recommended that from the age of twelve until marriage girls should be taught “to do and understand all points of huswifery rightly and perfectly”.²⁶

The operation of the marriage discourse then had clear implications for the differential training and employment opportunities available to spinsters and bachelors in seventeenth century England. In rural areas a period of time in agricultural service was perhaps the most common employment for young single men, who received training and development in the areas of arable or animal husbandry. Though there was no fixed age at which youths left home to become servants in husbandry, the majority of young men entered service in their early to mid teens and remained in service, though not necessarily with the same master, until they reached the ages of between twenty and twenty-five.²⁷ The rank of male servants employed by Nathaniel Bacon on his estate at Stiffkey in north Norfolk, for example, was composed largely of young unmarried men who were generally employed for anything from a few weeks to over three years. Such bachelors constituted the elite within the farm workforce, and spent the majority of their time looking after stock and working with horses on the land.²⁸

²⁶ Anon, *Office*, 142, 136-7.

²⁷ Kussmaul, *Servants*, 70-1, 79.

²⁸ A. Hassell Smith, “Labourers in late sixteenth-century England: a case study from north Norfolk [Part I]”, *Continuity and Change*, 4 (1989): 15, 17.

In urban areas, meanwhile, the opportunities for young men were dominated by the system of craft and trade apprenticeships. Within this system of training and development, apprentices were bound to masters for a fixed number of years, the norm being seven, after which - assuming they had successfully completed the term agreed - they were granted entry into the appropriate guild association, and allowed to practise their new-found trade or craft in their own right.²⁹ The mean age at which young men entered apprenticeship, according to surviving autobiographies, lay between fourteen and fifteen, although Rappaport has discovered that most apprenticeships in London did not begin until youths had reached their late teens or early twenties.³⁰ Entry into a profitable craft or trade was not always possible, for successful penetration of the guild sector was largely a function of wealth. The relative cost of indentures therefore ensured that young men from wealthier families were more likely to gain admission to positions in high status companies such as those of the drapers, grocers, mercers or merchant tailors, while those from poorer backgrounds were more often found amongst the workshops of lower status craftsmen and small scale manufacturers such as the coopers, hosiers, carders, feltmakers and carpenters.³¹

Nevertheless, in comparative terms single men were far better placed in terms of vocational opportunity than their female counterparts, whose training and employment were consistent with dominant female stereotypes that typified a woman's existence only in terms of marriage and the household. As Sir Thomas Smith had reasoned in the sixteenth century, the proper roles of husband and wife were as follows:

the man to get, to travaile abroad, to defende: the wife, to save that which commeth of the husbandes labor for the nurtriture of the children and family of them both, and to keepe all at home neat and cleane.³²

²⁹ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 84-5. Under the terms of the Statute of Artificers it was not lawful for anyone to set up, occupy, exercise or use any craft "excepte he shall have bene brought uppe therein seven yeres at the least as Apprentyce". See Tawney and Power, *Tudor*, 347.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 62; Rappaport, *Worlds*, 295.

³¹ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 87-8. Premiums for entry into trades varied widely. In seventeenth-century Bristol, for example, a mercer received £70 for an apprentice, a merchant and a saddler, the sum of £20, and a shoemaker, a tiler and a ropemaker all received less than £5. *Ibid.*, 91.

³² T. Smith, *De Republica Anglorum A Discourse of the Commonwealth of England*, ed. L. Alston (Shannon, 1972), 22.

Thus while it was understood that men required an occupational identity that they could offer as the public face of the household, women did not.³³ The development of what Michael Roberts has called this “self-conscious, politically informed sense of occupational identity” held serious implications for the practical opportunities available to single women, and consequently their ability to be financially independent.³⁴ In the first instance it rationalised the denial of any education and training to single women that fell outside the parameters of general housewifery. Some did manage to secure a measure of vocational training, for the medieval custom of “apprenticing” one’s wife and/or daughters was not uncommon, and on occasions could even be highly specialised: Percy Willoughby, the seventeenth century doctor and gynaecologist, encouraged his daughter to work alongside him; and the niece of Dr William Butler, an eminent and eccentric physician who died in 1617, claimed “that from him she had divers receipts” (knowledge of treatments/medications).³⁵ Formal apprenticeships for girls were also not unknown. In the Tudor period girls were bound to a variety of masters in the skilled trades of London and elsewhere, and during the early Stuart period too there are occasional glimpses of girls being apprenticed to craftsmen: according to the Southampton Apprentice Registers, Margerie Lee was bound apprentice to a joiner for ten years in 1609, Katherine Sadler was bound to John Etride, a sergeweaver in 1617, and Elizabeth Greene was registered apprentice to a barber in 1618.³⁶ However, the number of girls who were actually indentured was always low, and as Chapter Three suggested, appears to have diminished over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under the joint pressure of an influx of male apprentices and the view that the apprenticing of women, at least those of middling and gentle status, constituted a less respectable course of action.

An examination of the relative economic opportunities available to single men and women between 1601 and 1700 reveals the full impact of the marriage discourse in the economic sector. Though the determination of bachelor employment from probate material is often difficult because of the problems inherent in identifying single men in the source material, nevertheless a survey of over seven hundred wills

³³ Roberts, “Women”, 89.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁵ Christie, ed., *John Worthington*, 258.

³⁶ A.J. Merson, ed., *A Calendar of Southampton Apprenticeship Registers, 1609-1740*, Southampton Record Series, 12 (1968): 61-4.

and inventories analysed in the course of the study has revealed provincial bachelors - unsurprisingly - to have been active in a diverse number of economic roles, from those of travelling musician to hospital governor.³⁷ Moreover, in the capital the opportunities for single men appear to have been even better: the professional status of nearly six hundred bachelors over the age of twenty-five in London, recorded in 1695 under the terms of the Marriage Duty Act, reveals them in a wide range of occupational guises from high status attorneys, goldsmiths, physicians and merchants to more lowly warehousemen, tobacconists and shoemakers.³⁸

Analysis of the inventories of single men can also help to identify the nature of their employment. The inventory of Charles Darte, bachelor, of the London parish of St. Giles in Cripplegate, for example, suggests he may have been a blacksmith, for it includes references to irons, hammers, wheels, coppers, anvils and a grindstone.³⁹ That of Henry Mason, another bachelor of St. Giles, indicates that the testator had in his possession four fishing rods and a variety of other fishing tackle, while the appraisers of the goods of William Bayley, bachelor of the parish of St. Andrew in Holborn, listed a coach and three horses on his inventory schedule.⁴⁰ An inventory can also provide evidence of secondary or subsidiary activities. Thus in Lincolnshire, for example, at least 129 of the 379 bachelors studied were involved in the formal lending of money, 9 had spinning wheels and at least one single man appears to have been renting out a cow.⁴¹ In addition, John Wilkinson of Owmbly in Lincolnshire had a quantity of pot, pan and “lay” metal in his possession as well as some “dish pewter”, while other single men were involved in the growing of hemp or the sale of cheese and butter, often related to their agricultural activities - of the 379 Lincolnshire bachelors surveyed in the course of the study, at least a third (130) were involved in

³⁷ See Appendix I. In addition, the full range of occupational titles used in the probate material can be found in Appendix IV, Table A4.1.

³⁸ Glass, ed., *London Inhabitants*, passim.

³⁹ G.L. MS 19504/36/59, 1687, Charles Darte.

⁴⁰ G.L. MS 19504/31/08, 1684, Henry Mason; G.L. MS 19504/26/42, 1681, William Bayley.

⁴¹ The majority were unlikely to be involved in the process of spinning themselves. Only William Burnam of Grantham (L.A.O. INV 125/18, 1621) appeared to have no agricultural interests, but alongside “a twisting wheele for thred” and his “hempen” and “dublin” wheels, his inventory referenced his “workengear”. The others were farmers and probably relied on the services of itinerant spinners: Mary Ashe of Horsley had been working as a servant to a Duke (Buckley), but by the 1690s she was living by herself in a cottage she claimed as her own, making her living by going about spinning from house to house. See Ecclesall, 1693/98, 25.

farming, while another third (139) were cottagers who enjoyed the benefit of common rights.⁴²

The less fortunate of the single men were those without permanent employment or access to land. In urban areas, restricted opportunities for seasonal employment ensured that a number of poorer bachelors like Thomas Wotton, twenty-eight, of Lichfield, recorded on the town census of 1692 as a “bachelor, pauper and chimney sweep”, were likely to remain on the social margins.⁴³ In rural areas, however, the changing requirements of the agricultural year offered poorer bachelors opportunities to employ their skills and resources as day labourers in a number of temporary and seasonal jobs. Indeed, this factor alone may help account for the fact that a greater proportion of single men relative to single women were residing in the Lincolnshire countryside over the course of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ Estate owners like Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey in Norfolk, for example, employed a number of specialist and non-specialist day labourers in the course of the agricultural year alongside a more permanent contingent of servants. Since seasonal tasks such as hedging, ditching, weeding and harvesting were undertaken mainly by transient labourers who provided their own tools, single men like John Chapell of Aswardby in Lincolnshire, whose inventory listed a scythe but little else amongst his possessions, probably made their living as itinerant scythemen.⁴⁵

Although occupational designations are rare on women’s probate documents, for women in direct contrast to men were defined almost exclusively in terms of their marital status, a close analysis of their probate inventories can yield a considerable amount of detail regarding the extent of their economic activities.⁴⁶ In theory a single woman, as a *feme sole*, could receive training, obtain the freedom of the town, and trade and do business on her own account.⁴⁷ In practice, however, the ability to trade as a single woman was highly circumscribed, for among the single women of

⁴² L.A.O. INV 175/454, 1671, John Wilkinson. See later in the chapter for a comparison with single women.

⁴³ Lichfield, 1695, 15.

⁴⁴ Eighty-eight per cent of the single men in Lincolnshire lived in the countryside, as opposed to seventy-seven per cent of single women. The figure for Cheshire women was seventy-six per cent. See Appendix IV, Table A4.7.

⁴⁵ L.A.O. INV 85/57, 1593, John Chapell. Smith has suggested that scythemen appear to have been unmarried migrants. Smith, “Labourers”, 17-19.

⁴⁶ The most common exception to this rule is the application of the term “spinster”, which appears to have retained a measure of occupational significance when used to describe married women or widows. See Appendix II for a discussion of the use of this term.

⁴⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 169.

Lincolnshire and Cheshire only a small number appear to have successfully penetrated the craft or trade sector: two inventories reference the existence of a loom; one lists a wright's tools among the household goods; one suggests the testator had been involved in the retailing of mercery and grocery goods; another provides details of items of hardware; and a further includes a reference to a selection of barber's instruments.⁴⁸ Sadly, this picture of restricted economic opportunity is likely to have been mirrored elsewhere. According to the articles of the Weaver's Company in London "no woman or maid [could] use or exercise the art of weaving upon any loom, sapin or bench except she be the widow of one of the same gild" and in Oxford where the council controlled entry into the trading community, women were not enrolled as freemen between 1500 and 1800; the independent spinster, it appears, "had no place in the Oxford commercial community".⁴⁹ Southampton officials also pursued a policy of exclusion and discrimination in dealing with the applications of single female traders. In some instances, such as when Mrs Ecton appeared with her stepdaughter in 1607 to request the latter "be admitted to open a shop above the Bar and sell small wares by retail", permission was denied outright.⁵⁰ And even when the authorities took an outwardly more progressive stance, discrimination was still a major issue: Jane Zains, one of the first women to pay a Stall and Art fee to enable her to open a linen drapery business in Southampton was required to pay a fee of 2s. 6d. for the privilege, considerably more than the sum of 2d. applicable in the case of most men and widows at that time.⁵¹

Spinsters with cash resources were then best positioned to circumvent restrictions on their earning potential, and many, as Chapter Three indicated, chose to exploit the growing demand for credit facilities. But as the seventeenth century progressed those with little or no access to liquid capital found their remunerative opportunities increasingly circumscribed as access to vocational training diminished under the weight of economic and social policies designed to restrict single women to the domestic sphere. Under the terms of the Statute of Artificers of 1563, anyone

⁴⁸ C.R.O. WI 1668, Mary Ridgway, C.R.O. WI 1692, Sarah Lownds; L.A.O. INV131/44, 1626, Enie Tharralde; C.R.O. WI 1668, Ann Walley (mercier/grocer), L.A.O. INV 182A/87, 1681, Hannah Goodwin (hardware merchant); C.R.O. WS 1676, Elizabeth Robinson.

⁴⁹ Rappaport, *Worlds*, 39; M. Prior, "Women and the urban economy: Oxford 1500-1800", in M. Prior ed., *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (1985), 103, 110.

⁵⁰ A.M. Froide, "Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England", in J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide, eds., *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800* (Pennsylvania, 1999), 248.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

under the age of thirty being unmarried with no trade, craft, lands or income, nor goods to “the clere value of x poundes” could be retained in service “and shall not refuse to serve accordinge to the tenor of this statute, upon the payne and penaltie hereafter mentioned”.⁵² In terms of their employment opportunities, single women as a group were then most heavily concentrated in the traditional role of servant, a function not only of their marital status, but in addition of contemporary understandings regarding the proper role and position of women in early modern society. For in pragmatic terms the institution of service appeared to offer the most suitable foundation for female training and development, with all young girls, even those engaged ostensibly in the productive sectors, receiving instruction in techniques of housewifery. Unmarried maids on the Stiffkey estate, for example, who were contracted as dairymaids, were also employed as laundry maids and were trained to spin, weave and knit stockings.⁵³ Moreover, a job in service provided food, accommodation and an opportunity to save, and perhaps most significantly, maintained single women under the aegis of male control. This is not to suggest that all single women were successfully incorporated within the sphere of contracted service, and in urban areas in particular, it was possible for a number of spinsters to bypass statutory controls. Thus Elizabeth Gee was registered present in at least two of the households in Lichfield in 1692 in her capacity as charmaid, and Agnes Cowper of St. Saviours parish in Southwark stated she had spent several years as a charwoman in London in the early seventeenth century.⁵⁴ Others like Margaret Litton of Sandford Street in Lichfield, and the Bailey sisters - Prudence, Ann and Dorothy - of Bowe and Bread Street, managed to support themselves and maintain their independence by taking in paying boarders.⁵⁵

But unregulated employment by single women appeared as a threat to social and economic order. Concern over “masterless” young women is most visible in the urban records of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when demographic expansion and rampant inflation served to undermine the workings of even the best parochial provision. As Michael Roberts has argued, the inflationary pressures of the late sixteenth century contributed towards changing the nature of women’s work in

⁵² Tawney and Power, eds., *Tudor*, 339-40. Magistrates had the power to imprison those who refused to serve.

⁵³ Smith, “Labourers”, 17.

⁵⁴ Lichfield, 1695, 3, 5; London Metropolitan Archives P92/SAV/1420.

⁵⁵ Lichfield, 1695, 21, 8.

towns between 1570 and 1650, resulting in an increase in the number of women employed in the retail and domestic sectors, many of whom were engaged on a casual basis.⁵⁶ Towns and corporations were occasionally prepared to allow some women the chance to supplement their household income - the bakers' ordinances of 1598 in Hull, for example, provided for poor women to market loaves by offering them thirteen for the price of a dozen - but such opportunities were normally extended only to wives and widows.⁵⁷ Working outside accepted boundaries in the case of single women suggested an individualistic life style based around self-determination rather than sanctioned models of training and development, and town elites therefore intervened from the late sixteenth century to more closely control their activities. Complaint was made in Southampton in 1597 for example, that "theare arr in this towne dyvers young women and maidens w[h]ich kepe themselves out of s[er]vice and worcke for themselves in dyv[er]s mens houses contrary to the statute w[hi]ch we dess[i]re may be considered of and reformacon thereof to be had".⁵⁸ In Manchester too, in 1584, the puritan town officials announced their discontent with single women who, according to their understanding, indulged "in abusing themselves with young men and others, having not any man to control them ... in consideration whereof the jury doth order that no single woman unmarried shall be at their own hands, or keep any house or chamber within this town".⁵⁹ Such orders were reiterated in Manchester at regular intervals in the following decades, and heightened levels of concern were a feature of other towns in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁰

The ramifications of such decisions on the economic freedoms of single women were significant. Four women of South Milton who had maintained themselves "by their own honest employment of spinning which they followed many years" were told to put themselves into service.⁶¹ Elizabeth Cockes, a charmaid for Walter Barnes of Southampton in 1608 was given a week to find a master, or receive appropriate punishment, and Jane and Anne Wright, "both single persons living upon their labour" were taken from home, and presumably lodged in the local House of

⁵⁶ Roberts, "Women", 91-3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁸ S. Wright, " 'Churmaids, Huswyfes and Hucksters': the employment of women in Tudor and Stuart Salisbury", in L. Charles and L. Duffin, eds., *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (1985), 104.

⁵⁹ J. Harland, ed., *Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester in the Sixteenth Century*, Chetham Society, 63 (1864): 157.

⁶⁰ In Norwich in June 1609 the Mayor's Court ordered overseers to root out maids and single women who "lyve at their owne handes". See Griffiths, *Youth*, 377.

⁶¹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 247.

Correction.⁶² Though single men laboured under the weight of the same legislation, the chances of being presented for what Paul Griffiths has labelled “a habit of independence” were clearly gender related - of 263 cases of being “out of service” in the city of Norwich between 1560 and 1645 at least eighty per cent (212) proved to involve single women. Moreover cases presented for “being at their own hand” were almost entirely gender specific; the only case Griffiths could find involving a single man appeared in the records of 1632.⁶³

There were a limited number of opportunities for single women in the retail sector, especially in less conservative atmosphere of seventeenth century London. The inventories of Mary Harper and Elizabeth Barker, for example, both of whom were spinsters living in St. Giles parish in Cripplegate at the end of the seventeenth century, suggest that the testators in question had been shopkeepers, since both list quantities of haberdashery goods - bone lace, linen, thread, silk, tape - and Mary’s in addition included references to shelves and a counter.⁶⁴ But certainly during the earlier part of the century at least, such activity was likely to have been the preserve of the wealthier spinster of middling or gentry status. Thus Elizabeth Chauncey, the daughter of a Leicester gentleman and Eleanor Reade, gentlewoman and sempster, originally from Gloucester, both appear in the work of Vivien Brodsky Elliot as independent shopkeepers in early seventeenth-century London, alongside the visibly successful spinster Anne Porter, the daughter of a Wiltshire yeoman, who at thirty years old was “at her own government and keepeth a flaxe shoppe for herself and hires servants and hath done these 4 years or so”.⁶⁵

Retail opportunities in the provinces appear to have been considerably more restricted. Only six single women - one in Lincolnshire and five in Cheshire - can be clearly identified as shopkeepers from their probate material, and all appear in the records of later seventeenth century.⁶⁶ Thus apart from the involvement of single women in the formal lending market, their work appears to have been heavily concentrated in the areas usually associated with female employment - carding,

⁶² C.W.J. Connor, ed., *The Southampton Mayor's Book of 1606-1608*, Southampton Record Series, 21(1978): 112.

⁶³ P. Griffiths, “Masterless Young People in Norwich, 1560-1645”, in Griffiths at al., eds., *Experience*, 153.

⁶⁴ G.L. MS 19504/44/16, 1692, Mary Harper; G.L. MS 19504/43/45, 1691, Elizabeth Barker.

⁶⁵ Elliott, “Single Women”, 91-2; idem., “Mobility”, 224.

⁶⁶ C.R.O. WI 1691, Hannah Acton; C.R.O. WS 1660, Mary Jackson; C.R.O. WS 1689, Lydia Royle; C.R.O. WS 1686, Mary Poole; C.R.O. WI 1668, Ann Walley; L.A.O. INV 182A/87, 1681, Hannah Goodwin. (Walley and Goodwin were discussed above, fn. 47)

spinning, washing and ironing - and most would have had little option but to combine temporary and seasonal work with marginal employments appropriate to their age and condition.⁶⁷ Such work could take a number of forms. Larger households, like that of the Seymour family of Berry Pomeroy in Devon, for example, employed single women on a temporary basis to help with the washing - the accounts included a week's "board wages" for three laundry maids - while others required temporary help in their gardens, for the purposes of weeding or picking fruit.⁶⁸ The provisioning demands of the local estate owner could also take on remunerative significance for single women: the household and farm accounts of the Shuttleworth family of Gawthorpe Hall are able to reveal that 4d. was paid out in July 1610 to "a wench which brought winberries from Burneley woode" and in June 1612, 6d. was given to a maid "which did helpe to catch rabbits".⁶⁹ But profitable opportunities could also appear in more unusual guises. According to her will, Bridget Phillips, spinster, of the Lincolnshire town of Gainsborough, bequeathed the sum of fifteen pounds to a fellow parishioner in 1687 to pay for her funeral and in addition "to bring one of his own Daughters and two more to help carve the grave".⁷⁰

Bye-employments too formed a major source of spinsters' incomes. Spinning, stocking knitting and lace-making, for example, could easily be undertaken alongside other rural activities, and in conjunction with a limited level of access to land, could provide a number of single women in the countryside with vital remunerative opportunities. For as a cottager with common rights, a single woman could make a reasonable living as a small dairywoman keeping one or two cows: in the Devonshire community of Colyton, lacemaking and dairying together were able to offer support

⁶⁷ Spinning white warp or flax, carding, and knitting hose were the most common occupations of single women listed on the Census. Katheryn Downynge, sixty, and Ane Judith, thirty-eight, spun white warp, while Cristian Collard, forty, knitted hose. Alyce Savaun, fifty, spun and helped women in need. See J.F. Pound, ed., *The Norwich Census of the Poor 1570*, Norfolk Record Society, 40 (1971): 46, 70, 58.

⁶⁸ The total amount paid out to the laundry maids was 18s. See Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 273-4.

⁶⁹ J. Harland, ed., *The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall, in the County of Lancaster, at Smithills and Gawthorpe, from September 1582 to October 1621, Part 1*, Chetham Society, 35 (1856): 189, 200. T.S. Willan has highlighted the role of activities like these in the provisioning of the large household. He views these payments as tips for gifts, the monetary value of which was determined by the size and weight of the gift, the distance it had been brought and the status of both giver and recipient. However, he indicates that whatever the combination of effort and social custom involved, such tips were surprisingly large relative to regular wage payments, and were commonplace. T.S. Willan, *The inland trade Studies in English internal trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Manchester, 1976), 70-1.

⁷⁰ L.A.O. Stow Wills 186, 1687, Bridget Phillips.

to a community of spinsters in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁷¹ The position of spinsters in Colyton, however, may have been the exception rather than the rule, for relative to their male counterparts, single women as owners of livestock appear to have been significantly disadvantaged. As Table 5.1 below indicates, only nineteen per cent of single women in Lincolnshire and seventeen per cent of those in Cheshire owned one or more cows between 1601 and 1700; in comparison, the proportion of single men in Lincolnshire with one or more cows stood at the much higher level of thirty-six per cent. Neither was such obvious disadvantage confined to the cow-owning population. In terms of sheep, pigs and even more generalised livestock ownership too, the balance of possession was weighted heavily in favour of bachelors - only around a third of spinsters in both Cheshire and Lincolnshire had any amount of stock with which to bolster their standard of living, compared with over two thirds of the Lincolnshire single men.

Table 5.1: Details of livestock held by Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.

Livestock	Lincoln men 1601-1700 (n = 379)	Lincoln women 1601-1700 (n = 274)	Cheshire women 1601- 1700 (n = 384)
Some livestock	287 (76%)	100 (36%)	110 (29%)
1 or more cows	137 (36%)	51 (19%)	66 (17%)
1 or more sheep	213 (56%)	61 (22%)	31 (8%)
1 or more pigs	34 (9%)	16 (6%)	11 (3%)
1 or more cows + sheep	101 (27%)	21 (8%)	13 (3%)

Furthermore, as Table 5.2 below reveals, the access of single women to all productive resources appears to have been severely restricted, a situation, once again, that was characteristic of both regions under consideration.

⁷¹ Sharpe, "Literally Spinsters", 46-65.

Table 5.2: Access of singles in Lincolnshire and Cheshire to land and livestock as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.

Category	Lincolnshire Men 1601-1700, n = 379	Lincolnshire Women 1601-1700, n = 274	Cheshire Women 1601-1700, n = 384
Non-agricultural	80 (21%)	165 (60%)	262 (68%)
Cottager	139 (37%)	83 (30%)	92 (24%)
Small Farmer	121 (32%)	18 (6%)	27 (7%)
Large Farmer	19 (5%)	1 (0.4%)	0
Landholder	0	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.5%)
Servant	20 (5%)	7 (3%)	1 (0.3%)
Total	379 (100%)	274 (99.8%)	384 (99.8%)

Key: - **Non-agricultural:** no evidence of access to land or livestock.

Cottager: evidence of twenty or less examples of livestock of any type.

Small Farmer: evidence of access to less than fifty acres of land or between twenty-one and ninety-nine examples of livestock of any type in the case of livestock farmers.⁷²

Large Farmer: evidence of access to fifty or more acres of land or more than one hundred examples of livestock in the case of livestock farmers.

Only around six per cent of spinsters in Lincolnshire and seven per cent of those in Cheshire could be categorised as small farmers, and less than one per cent in either region had access to large amounts of land and/or livestock. Single men in Lincolnshire, on the other hand, had much better access to productive resources, for thirty-two per cent appear to have had a foothold in farming activity and at least five per cent of bachelors were large farmers. There was more equality in respect of the cottage-owning single population, but the differential proportions of male and female non-agricultural singles - those without even the most basic access to land or livestock

⁷² Numbers here may be inflated since where there was no reference to the amount of land held, the testator was entered into the category of "small farmer".

- displays the full measure of relative disparity: sixty-eight per cent of Lincolnshire spinsters and sixty per cent of those in Cheshire had nothing to rely on but their labour (and any capital they may have accumulated) in comparison with only twenty-one per cent of the bachelors in Lincolnshire.

Implicit in this analysis is the fact that single women as a group were in the longer term more likely to suffer as a result of poverty or destitution than their male counterparts, a situation that is borne out with some clarity by contemporary evidence. Of those individuals whose status was given as single in the Norwich Census of the Poor in 1570 for example, at least 137 were women, a total of 16 per cent of all the women surveyed, but only 30 were single men, constituting only 6 per cent of all men.⁷³ Yet the majority of single women appear to have received little sympathy from parish officials, for while they were clearly poor enough to be included in the census only a minority of the unmarried women listed received any type of charitable payment. Like their male counterparts they were deemed “able-bodied” by local overseers, their inability to find work failing to translate into eligibility for poor relief, despite the fact that as single women they were victims of an overstocked labour market, in which their access to opportunity and remuneration relative to that of men was severely disadvantaged. Entitlement to relief for single women was clearly related more closely to permanent disability, for “Ezarde Hales, never married, a lame woman of 58 yeris, that knytt hosen” and “Cycely Tolye of the age of 50, never married, a very syke person and without helpe, and in her helth spyn white warpe” were both allocated a small amount of cash.⁷⁴ While a number of towns appear to have been particularly receptive to the plight of the poor widow, their attitudes towards single females were less visibly sympathetic - in Aldenham in Hertfordshire in the seventeenth century, forty-eight per cent of those receiving poor relief were widows, but no more than five per cent were unmarried women.⁷⁵ In Warwickshire too, where details of weekly pensions have been calculated for twenty-three parishes, the vast majority of women in receipt of poor relief between Easter 1638 and Easter

⁷³ Pound, ed., *Norwich Census*, 95.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 63, 28. Ezarde Hales received 4d. per week in alms and Cycely Tolye, 1d.

⁷⁵ Cited in Froide, “Marital status”, 253. Attitudes may have changed towards the end of the seventeenth century with the development of a more paternalist mentality among elites in which they recognised their obligation to relieve the under- and unemployed in addition to the deserving poor. See S. Hindle, “The Growth of Social Stability in Restoration England”, *The European Legacy*, 5 (2000), 568.

1639 can be identified as widows.⁷⁶ Even the elderly and disabled were expected to work wherever possible: Elizabeth Pritchard of Eccleshall, described at the age of seventy-three as a “good, ancient virgin”, who had been “lame in the side” for a period of four years, apparently made her living through a combination of spinning, nursing and begging.⁷⁷

Clearly not all single women were poverty stricken. As Claire Cross discovered in her study of female testators from Hull and Leeds in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, there could be a gulf in wealth separating single women both within and across individual communities.⁷⁸ Yet as a group their restricted access to vocational training and opportunity ensured that all things being equal, their situation was more precarious than that of their male counterparts. Indeed the relative disadvantage of single women is highlighted by Peter Earle’s study of the middle class in late seventeenth century London, in which he suggests that of those who paid the 1692 Poll Tax, only two per cent of all spinsters were assessed above the basic rate in comparison with thirteen per cent of all bachelors.⁷⁹ Moreover, an analysis of the inventoried wealth of male and female testators in Lincolnshire and Cheshire reveals further evidence of single women’s economic inferiority: while single men in Lincolnshire exhibited a mean inventory figure of £31 between 1601 and 1700 the mean inventories of single women in Lincolnshire and Cheshire during the same period stood at £24 and £27 respectively.⁸⁰

III. Celibacy, family and inheritance

The inability of single women to obtain substantive vocational training in occupations outside the domestic sphere, and their lower level of access to productive resources was not the only factor affecting their capacity to achieve economic equality, for two other customary practices militated against the notion of female independence. In the first instance, the practical application of the idea of celibacy as a phase in the lifecycle process undermined the need for single women to have a

⁷⁶ *Idem.*, *The Birthpangs of Welfare: poor relief and parish governance in seventeenth-century Warwickshire*, Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, 40 (2000), 17-8.

⁷⁷ D. Willen, “Women in the Public Sphere in Early Modern England: The Case of the Urban Working Poor”, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988): 564; Eccleshall, 1693/1698, 68.

⁷⁸ Cross, “Northern Women”, 84.

⁷⁹ P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class. Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (1989), 167.

⁸⁰ Figures for mean personal wealth exclude amounts for debts and leases.

permanent or even temporary foothold in the occupational sector. Of the unmarried Victorian woman without employment or financial security, Janet Dunbar has written that “she became the aunt, the nurse, the useful member of the family who had no responsibilities of her own, the person whom the others call upon for help in any emergency”.⁸¹ Such was the case with her seventeenth century counterpart. Ellin Stout, for example, supposedly too delicate to withstand the rigours of marriage, became housekeeper to the family after the death of her father in order to allow her mother to supervise the farm business. She assisted her brother William and his apprentice in his grocery shop in addition to acting as his housekeeper and looking after her elderly mother (who moved in with them when her health failed). She also took on the role of surrogate parent to two of her brother Leonard’s young children.⁸² Thus the needs of the family were often of paramount importance in shaping the pattern of spinsters’ lives. Some like Sarah Lindon, thirty-seven, and Sarah Bull, forty - both living at their parental homes in Lichfield in 1695 - were called upon to provide support to their elderly widowed fathers.⁸³ Others such as Dennys Geele of Ealing in 1599, were maintained as servants in the households of their relatives, while others still were expected to fill the role of family nursemaid - having returned from his captaincy in the parliamentary army in 1647, Adam Eyre’s neighbour was unable to let Adam have one of his daughters for a maid “by reason of his wife’s being ill”.⁸⁴ Such duties clearly had the ability to impact heavily on occupational in addition to marital opportunities.

The seventeenth century also witnessed a pattern of development amongst middling status households, discussed earlier in Chapter Three, in which parents may have considered retaining their daughters at home as comparable, even increasingly preferential, to service or apprenticeship in educational value. In point of fact, the increasing propensity for single women from wealthier backgrounds to remain in the

⁸¹ Cited in B. Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1989), 226.

⁸² Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 76, 90, 105, 159, 142.

⁸³ Lichfield, 1695, 20-1. It was also common to find spinster daughters living with their widowed mothers, a factor that may have increased the odds of the daughter remaining single. See O. Hufton, “Women without men: widows and spinsters in Britain and France in the eighteenth century”, *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984): 362.

⁸⁴ Allison, *Ealing*, 18; Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 211. Bachelors were also called upon to provide family assistance. Richard Wicherley of Myddle, who never married, adopted his brother Thomas’s son, and “put him to school”, while William Stout took Mary Hall, daughter of his niece Elizabeth into his house “free” in order to improve her education. See Gough, *Myddle*, 73; Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 226.

parental household by the end of the seventeenth century did not escape the shrewd observations of contemporary commentators: according to the statistician Gregory King, “The Richer the parish the more Females, by reason the Dau[ghte]rs remain more at home, and there are more Maid servants[;] But the Sons are more disposed of abroad to Schools, Universities Trades and Employments”.⁸⁵ Amongst the ranks of tradesmen and craftsmen it was also not uncommon to find daughters retained at home longer than sons. James Fretwell and his brother, for example, were both apprenticed out by their father - a tradesman in Yorkshire - but their sister remained in the family home until she reached the age of twenty-two, at which point she dutifully took on the role of housekeeper to her brother James.⁸⁶ Lower down the social scale there may also have been some detaining of daughters at home, although the practice in this instance may have been occasioned by different priorities. Much of the casual work on farms was given to female relatives of male workers, with estate owners like Sir William Becher employing the wives and daughters of his male workers on a temporary basis as and when required. Daughters living at home on the estate of Sir Nathaniel Bacon at Stiffkey too were often part of the labour force: in 1593-4 fourteen out of thirty-five labouring women were unmarried daughters and were drawn from as few as nine labouring families in Stiffkey. Conversely, young men do not appear to have been bounded by the same considerations - sons of labourers rarely appear in the records of the Bacon estate before the occasion of their marriage.⁸⁷

In addition to their role as general helpmeets, the ability of single women to achieve independence was undermined by a further pragmatic response to discursive notions of singleness - an inheritance policy driven by understandings of differential need. A few girls were lucky enough to inherit property outright: John Hobson of Friskney, for example, bequeathed his house and land to his daughter when she attained the age of eighteen; and Thomas Nicholl of Glamford Briggs, glover, left the lease of his house to his daughter Jane, even though he had a son.⁸⁸ But while fathers who did not hold real estate were generally even-handed in the way they distributed their personal property between female and male children, men such as Edmund Howson of Hougham with lands and/or houses were only likely to devolve access to

⁸⁵ Prior, “Women”, 100.

⁸⁶ Ben-Amos, “Women”, 243.

⁸⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 274; A.Hassell Smith, “Labourers in late sixteenth-century England: a case study from north Norfolk [Part II]” *Continuity and Change*, 4 (1989): 370.

⁸⁸ L.A.O. LCC Wills 1630/348, John Hobson; L.A.O. LCC Wills 1631/253, Thomas Nicholl.

their daughters in default of any sons, all else being equal.⁸⁹ Yet it is access to land that appears as one of the key factors allowing single women to realize an independent existence in seventeenth century England. It has already been suggested that as a cottager with common rights a single woman could make a reasonable living if she had access to some remunerative activity in conjunction with a small amount of livestock. In addition, Amy Erickson has suggested that an independent existence was more likely to be a realistic possibility for unmarried women in Yorkshire than it was in Sussex, where landholding among women was much more rare.⁹⁰ In this respect, access to land appears as an alternative to money-lending in its ability to provide a route to economic autonomy. Indeed amongst the Lincolnshire spinsters, the holding of land (whether arable or pasture) and the lending of capital appear to have been to a large extent mutually exclusive: only three of the spinsters with access to land were also involved in the extension of credit.⁹¹ This was not the position among the Cheshire spinsters, where as many as twenty-one of those involved in money-lending also had access to land, but the problem of attaining self-sufficiency in the absence of liquid capital and without a foothold in the land is reflected most keenly by the fact that only fourteen per cent of the inventories in the Cheshire sample had no visible means of support (i.e., they included no references to land, capital, livestock, crafts or trades). This figure was higher in the Lincolnshire sample, but even here, less than a quarter of those in the inventory sample were without access to any productive resources apart from their labour.

In the absence of capital, access to land therefore appears as a vital means by which single women could achieve a measure of independence. Given the strength of the marriage discourse, it is then not surprising to find that levels of landholding among spinsters in both regions under consideration appear to have been extremely limited. No more than seven per cent of single women in Cheshire and six per cent of those in Lincolnshire enjoyed access to arable or pasture land between 1601 and 1700, far lower than the figure of twenty-two per cent apparent among the Lincolnshire bachelors over the same period. Moreover as Table 5.3 below suggests, the ability of single women as a group to hold land may have declined between 1601 and 1700

⁸⁹ L.A.O. LCC Wills 1631/20, Edmund Howson. Howson had no surviving sons and therefore left his close of pasture to his daughter Ann. More common bequests for single girls were cash, small amounts of livestock and various household goods.

⁹⁰ Erickson, *Women*, 192.

⁹¹ See Appendix IV, Table A4.8 for further details.

(after peaking in the second quarter of the century), in a trend that ran counter to the one visible amongst the inventories of the single men.

Table 5.3: Number of Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles with access to land as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.

Decade	Cheshire women, n = 384	Number with access to land (%)	Lincs. women, n = 274	Number with access to land (%)	Lincs. men, n = 379	Number with access to land (%)
1601-10	17	1 (6%)	18	0	39	7 (18%)
1611-20	34	1 (3%)	38	0	56	9 (16%)
1621-30	39	6(15%)	41	4 (10%)	42	9 (21%)
1631-40	31	4 (13%)	43	3 (7%)	45	10 (22%)
1641-50	23	3 (13%)	6	1 (17%)	10	1 (10%)
1651-60	1	0	1	1	3	0
1661-70	66	2 (3%)	44	2 (5%)	57	14 (25%)
1671-80	65	7 (11%)	36	2 (6%)	60	14 (23%)
1681-90	63	3 (5%)	24	2 (8%)	42	10 (24%)
1691-00	45	1 (2%)	23	1 (4%)	25	10 (40%)
Totals	384	28 (7%)	274	16 (6%)	379	84 (22%)

Numbers in this case are small, and therefore remain impressionistic, but suggest that polarities already visible in the 1600s had diverged further by the 1690s.

Unfortunately inventory analysis alone cannot reflect the true level of access to land - inventories only include details of leasehold land - but a review of the available will material confirms the levels of inferiority experienced by single women in this respect.⁹² Though adding the wills of spinsters in the Cheshire sample does inflate the proportion of those with access to land by two percentage points (nine per cent of single women were revealed as landholders by the addition of wills as opposed to the seven per cent suggested by the inventories), the picture remains a pessimistic

⁹² Inventories do offer details of stock holdings though, which can provide a good proxy for land holding.

one.⁹³ Moreover, other probate collections reflect a similar situation. Wills of singles in the Archdeaconry of Sudbury in the 1630s, for example, indicate that at least forty-four per cent of the men had some form of landholding compared to only fifteen per cent of the women, while a series of surveys taken of the land and properties of the See of Durham by order of the Commonwealth Parliament offers further evidence of single women's relative disadvantage.⁹⁴ The picture is somewhat complicated by the fact that a number of the women included in the survey were not given any marital status, but in the manor of Chester le Street there were no single women amongst the twenty-five leaseholders, and of eighty-eight copyholders detailed on the listings, only one woman was designated as a spinster. As many as five other single women could have enjoyed access to land, but even if these are included in the calculation, only five per cent of the landholders in total would have been single females. A similar picture emerges at Whickham and Easington, while in the communities of Gateshead and Houghton le Spring there is no evidence at all of single women holding land.⁹⁵ The experience of Thomas Holder's daughter Beatrix may therefore offer a good proxy for the relationship between landholding and single women during the seventeenth century, especially in smaller communities: when she inherited her father's holding of twenty-eight acres in Orwell in Cambridgeshire in 1607, she was the only unmarried women holding land in the whole of the parish at that time.⁹⁶

IV. Celibacy and residential opportunity

Since inheritance of property was often linked to that of land, opportunities for spinsters to have security of tenure in terms of where and with whom they lived were also determined to a large extent by the marital discourse. Thus single women who were over the age at which marriage was expected appear most conspicuously in the census material in one of two dependent roles, either daughter or servant.

Furthermore, as the seventeenth century progressed, the role of daughter came to

⁹³ The wills of single women in Lincolnshire could not be consulted on this occasion. See Appendix I.

⁹⁴ N. Evans, ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1630-1635*, Suffolk Record Society, 29 (1987); idem, ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1636-1638*, Suffolk Record Society, 35 (1993).

⁹⁵ Of the eighty-five copyholds in Whickham, twenty-four were held by women of which none were stated to be single, but four appear to have been so (i.e., five per cent of the total). In Easington there were seventy-six leaseholds and copyholds, but only three apparently belonged to single women (i.e., four per cent of the total). See D.A. Kirkby, ed., *Parliamentary Surveys of the Bishopric of Durham, Volume II*, Surtees Society, 185 (1972): Chester le Street, 1-41; Whickham, 80-109; Easington, 175-87; Gateshead, 110-131; Houghton le Spring, 142-74.

predominate in the census listings. Whereas by far the majority of single women over the age of twenty-five in the late sixteenth century agricultural community of Ealing appear in the role of servant, subsequent census details taken from the proto-industrial community of Chilvers Coton and the town of Lichfield reveal a growing preoccupation with the role of daughter, a situation that may have been occasioned by a combination of changing viewpoints, reduced employment opportunities, and rising concern about single women.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, by the late seventeenth century, the greatest proportion of single women over the age of twenty-five in the three communities analysed were still residing with one or more of their parents.⁹⁸

The roles of servant and daughter were fully compatible with the concept of celibacy as a life-cycle process, and in addition fulfilled the dominant criteria for the maintenance of male authority. As servants, single women were expected to lodge with their respective master or employer and remain under his charge as part of the household until their contract was terminated. On the Bacon estate in Norfolk, for example, maids were lodged in the estate yard in a room over the dairy.⁹⁹ Once their term of service had been completed, however, many like Alice Jenkinson, who according to her father Richard had dwelled “for all her life tyme at home with this deponent [Richard] and sometimes in service”, would have returned to their parental home.¹⁰⁰ Single men, on the other hand, appear from the census evidence to have been far less likely to return to the familial household in their capacity as sons if both their parents were living. In Ealing in 1599 there were a few cases in which young men over the age of twenty-seven were still employed as servants, but a greater number - except for the one bachelor who was heading his own household - appear as employees with a recognisable trade or occupation, and only one of the twenty-three bachelors on the listing was still living in his parental home.¹⁰¹ Almost a century later in Chilvers Coton the proportion of bachelors over the age of twenty-seven who were

⁹⁶ M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974; reprinted Stroud, 2000), 112.

⁹⁷ Allison, *Ealing; Chilvers Coton, 1684; Lichfield, 1695*. Since the average age at first marriage for women was around twenty-six and for men twenty-eight during this period these ages have been used to reveal the position of those who remained single at and after this point in time. In addition the age of twenty-five appears as a psychological marriage boundary for women in contemporary literature. Jane Barker, for example, urged her readers to be “Fearless of twenty-five and all its train”. Barker, “Virgin”, 360.

⁹⁸ See Appendix IV, Table A4.4. This trend appears to have continued into the eighteenth century. See R. Wall, “Woman alone in English Society”, *Annales de demographie historique* (1981), 312.

⁹⁹ Smith, “Labourers ... [Part I]”, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Elliott, “Mobility”, 247.

still resident in the family home had risen (five out of twenty-one appeared in the role of son), but unlike their female counterparts, the bulk of whom were residing with both of their parents, all the sons in Chilvers Coton were living either with a widowed mother or a widowed father; in addition there are at least four cases in which single men were heading their own household.¹⁰² Bachelors in Lichfield too were unlikely to be living within a familial setting: only eleven of the forty-eight bachelors over the age of twenty-seven were described as sons, with a further eleven (twenty-three per cent of the total) already holding the position of household head.¹⁰³

Opportunities for single women to head their own household were more highly circumscribed, for there are no examples of single women in this position in the census material from the communities of either Ealing or Chilvers Coton, and only five single women (four per cent of the total) from the town of Lichfield. Nevertheless, such opportunities did exist, and appear to have been expanding during the course of the seventeenth century. In the first instance this may have been a function of little more than the expansion in the number of lifelong single women, for access to property for spinsters was a feature of the inheritance process. Accordingly, *The Office of Christian Parents* reminded parents of their duty towards their children: “But if the children marry not, till or after 28 yeares of age, the parents are to set them in some place, trade, calling, or office, wherein they may live in some good fashion, either in their own family, or in some other house, or in a family of their owne by themselves”.¹⁰⁴ The fact that this culture of provision was filtered through the marital discourse, however, ensured that access to property for single women became constructed more frequently in terms of temporary provision than permanent arrangement. Thus John Walton, a petty chapman from Lincolnshire left his house to his daughter for her lifetime only “if she keepe her selfe unmarried”, while William Morris of Redgrave in Suffolk left his wife Margaret his parlour, parlour chamber and buttrey, when he died in February 1636, with the proviso that their daughter Ann was also allowed to dwell there “so long as she shall remain unmarried or until she thinks best to dwell elsewhere”.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the culture of temporary provision appears to have permeated much deeper than mere parental responsibility, for Mary Hordern of

¹⁰¹ Allison, *Ealing*.

¹⁰² Chilvers Coton, 1684.

¹⁰³ Lichfield, 1695. See also Tables A4.4 and A4.5 in Appendix IV for a comparison of the residential status of single men and women in Ealing, Chilvers Coton and Lichfield.

¹⁰⁴ Anon, *Office*, 204.

Betchton left her cottage in Cheshire to her aunt while her aunt remained single, instructing that it only be transferred to her uncle on the occasion of her aunt's marriage.¹⁰⁶ It may then have been the case that by exploiting arrangements established by relatives as an interim measure a growing number of single women were able to gain access to independent housing.

Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that localised structures of poor relief and a sympathetic housing market also functioned to aid a number of single women in their attempts to maintain an independent household. In certain areas, such as in Colyton, Devon, the system of poor relief and charity gave especial assistance to single people and allowed their separate residency. Accordingly, the parish chamber there had formed a collection of small dwellings with gardens, which rented out for around 4s. per year, or less, an amount that was not beyond the means of many of the single women employed in the lace-making trade.¹⁰⁷ In early modern Abingdon too there is evidence that almshouses were built as small units for single residency, a factor that facilitated the ability of single women to live as independent householders.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, while the increased preference among the middling groups to retain their daughters at home may have prevented a considerable number of spinsters from gaining a trade or occupation, remaining in the family home until both parents had died may eventually have militated in favour of their independence. In Lichfield it tended to be older women who headed their own households, and in Southampton too, Amy Froide's independent spinsters, in addition to being of elevated social status, had two other characteristics in common: all were relatively old; and all had lost their parents.¹⁰⁹

The fact that many of the spinsters who headed households were older, however, was not merely a function of their decision to remain within the family home, but also of contemporary constructions of female behaviour, for the greatest threat to the community from single women was perceived to be a sexual one.

¹⁰⁵ L.A.O. LCC WILLS 1630/297, John Walton; Evans, ed., *Wills* 35, 164.

¹⁰⁶ C.R.O. WS 1683, Mary Hordern. Bachelors too occasionally benefited from notions of familial responsibility; when John Coltas died in the Vale of Pickering in the 1680s he arranged in his will for his bachelor brother William to keep a room with his widow "soe long as he kepeth unmaryed". See Erickson, *Women*, 189.

¹⁰⁷ Sharpe, "Literally spinsters", 58-9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 59, fn. 53. In earlier Stuart Salisbury, however, single residency of women was more usually a temporary phenomenon.: *ibid.* Though the vast majority of singles in Lincolnshire and Cheshire appear to have been residing with others, the fact that a number owned bedroom furnishings plus kitchen equipment, however, suggests a more self-sufficient existence than might appear at first glance.

Consequently legislative control over the residency arrangements of single women was exercised most keenly in urban areas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, primarily to prevent the cost of the upkeep of single mothers falling on the parish. The order by the Norwich Assembly to apply the sections of the Statute of Artificers legislation relating to single women - "that no maydes [being able to serve] maye hyer chambers" or be harboured in any man's house (on pain of incarceration in prison of the local House of Correction) - was issued first in 1577. However, a further set of articles issued by the city in 1600 required the churchwardens and overseers of every parish to check "what maids or singlewomen keepe chambers by themselves beyng under the age of xl years and goe to their owne hands", as part of a general moral drive to regulate inmates and other undesirables.¹¹⁰ Single women who appeared independent, or who attempted to be so, were often suspected of prostitution, and treated accordingly.¹¹¹ Thus Elizabeth Hesketh, alias Blecker, spinster, was accused of keeping in her house one Elizabeth Aighton, a woman of ill fame, and Grace Kerrison, single woman, who "lyved very suspiciously" at Stephen Warnfrey's alehouse was ejected for "ill rule".¹¹² It was therefore much more common to find single men as lodgers or boarders in the houses of others than single women, even in urban areas.¹¹³

Calculating the relative proportions of single people living in the familial home, in the households of others, and in their own household at any one time is a formidable task. Documentary sources are limited, and where they do exist, highlight the multi-faceted and fluid nature of residential strategies amongst single people in seventeenth century England: living arrangements were driven by a complex and shifting mix of gender, survival of kin, stage in the lifecycle, access to property and economic situation.¹¹⁴ Census listings reveal celibates living in a variety of

¹⁰⁹ Froide, "Marital status", 241-2.

¹¹⁰ Griffiths, *Youth*, 382-3.

¹¹¹ Ruth Mazo Karras suggests that in Tudor England the term "single woman" could be used as the semantic equivalent of "prostitute". John Stow's late Tudor *Chronicle of London* refers to the prostitutes from the Stews as "singlewomen" and also describes the church yard where they were buried as the "single womans churchyard". However, it was not always a euphemism for prostitute. See R. Mazo Karras, "Sex and the Singlewoman", in Bennett and Froide, eds., *Singlewomen*, 131.

¹¹² J. Tait, ed., *Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records 1590-1606*, Chetham Society, 77 (1917): 27; Griffiths, *Youth*, 380.

¹¹³ In Lichfield in 1695, for example, forty-two per cent of bachelors over the age of twenty-seven had no visible familial relationship with their existing household as opposed to the much lower figure of fifteen per cent among spinsters over the age of twenty-five. See Appendix IV, Tables A4.4 and A4.5.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Priestley's bachelor uncle was a "tabler" with one or both of his parents for a total of around forty years during the seventeenth century. See "Some Memoirs Concerning the family of the

communal situations, for example: in groups of brothers; of sisters; of brothers and sisters; of male friends; and of female friends. Alongside this individuals appear in a range of familial settings: with parents; with close relatives; and also with more distant kin. In addition there are occasional examples of lone celibates.¹¹⁵ But while single men enjoyed relative freedom in respect of where and with whom they resided, the keynote of female experience remains one of enforced dependence. Whether as daughters, servants or general helpmeets, single women beyond the average age at first marriage were maintained as far as possible within the parameters of the family.

V. Celibacy, adulthood and social status

As the analysis above has revealed, the marital discourse, in constructing celibacy as a lifecycle phenomenon, functioned to deliver differential access to economic and social autonomy according to gender, in order to maintain the polarities of dependence and independence vital to the reproduction of existing gender roles. In addition, however, dominant understandings of singleness as a lifecycle process created an overlap between the notions of youth and celibacy that had significant ramifications in terms of the role, status and identity of lifelong celibates: in a society that was economically, socially and culturally geared to celibacy as a lifecycle phenomenon, it was the occasion of marriage, as Chapter Two indicated, that represented a major transformation in social position. Indeed, in the historiography of the Tudor and Stuart periods, marriage appears as the key to entry into, and full acceptance by, the community at large, the “final incorporation of the couple into the hierarchies of age, gender and social status”.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, social historians have tended to isolate marriage as the primary indicator of adult status. Thus for John Gillis marriage appeared to serve as “*the male rite of passage*”, and although David

Priestleys”, in C. Jackson and S. Margerison, eds., *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Surtees Society, 77 (1886): 9. William Stout records lodging at three different addresses before taking his sister as housekeeper. After her death in 1724, he took a succession of nieces as housekeepers. In 1730 he let his house to Mary Dillworth, and boarded with her and her sister until they moved out, after which he let it to his nephew William. Stout himself then moved into rooms over his shop, and took another two of his nieces as housekeepers. See Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 198, 201, 205, 215.

¹¹⁵ Where single people did reside with kin, however, debts for board, lodging and other services were clearly recovered through probate, if they had not been paid out beforehand. John Nicholson, brother-in-law to Mathew Wilkinson of Springthorpe, stated on his administration account of 1683 that he “craveth an allowance for two yeares table [of] £10”: L.A.O. AD/AC/44/36, 1683, Mathew Wilkinson. Hope Petley, widow, sister to Faith Holmes of Grainby and administrator to her estate, felt justified in claiming the sum of £40 in 1664 “for her [Faith’s] dyet foure foure yeare”: L.A.O. AD/AC/43/10, 1664, Faith Holmes.

Cressy laid greater emphasis on the social importance of marriage for women, he too considered that marriage, as a mark of social maturity, signified a passage into adulthood.¹¹⁷ Marriage, in his view,

converted men into householders, and women into housekeepers. It made lads into masters and maids into dames. Through marriage their relationship to domestic authority became transformed. As single and dependent persons they had followed orders, but as married householders they issued instructions. Marriage for a man meant autonomy, mastery, responsibility, and the prospect of fathering a lineage. Marriage for a woman was, perhaps, the major defining moment of her life, determining her social, domestic, and reproductive future.¹¹⁸

However, while there is little doubt that marriage conferred new status on its male and female participants, it is a mistake to conflate the maturation process with that of marriage.¹¹⁹ Contemporaries, in this respect, were under no such illusions. For it was not marriage that rendered an individual adult, but rather the attainment of adulthood that rendered the individual ready and able to consider marriage. As the anonymous author of the *The Office of Christian Parents* recommended, “first we traine him from 14 till he be fit for marriage, and then consider how we may marrie him”.¹²⁰ William Gouge too separated out the processes of adulthood and marriage, revealing that by marriage “*men and women* are made husbands and wives. It is the only lawful means to make them fathers and mothers”.¹²¹ Thus when Dr. Worthington died in September 1670 his last will and testament discussed the arrangements that were to be made regarding his daughters marriages after they were “grown to marriageable estate”, and the antiquarian vicar, Abraham de la Pryme, in detailing his own ancestry, recorded in his diary the link, as he visualised it, between

¹¹⁶ Gillis, *For Better*, 75.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹⁸ Cressy, *Birth*, 287.

¹¹⁹ Sir Thomas Smith's much used frame of reference for male adulthood - that a man was not a yeoman until married - is not infrequently taken out of context. Smith was in fact discussing the origins of the word “yeoman”, and in doing so outlined the following; “it cannot be thought that yeoman should be said a young man, for commonly wee doe not call any a yeoman till he be married, and have children, and as it were have some authoritie among his neighbours”. Smith, *De Republica*, 45.

¹²⁰ Anon, *Office*, 142.

the adulthood of his father and his subsequent marriage in April 1670: “My father *being grown up to man’s estate* married Sara the daughter of Mr. Peter Smagge, who was a rich Frenchman”.¹²² Marriage may then have been the “surest test of adult status”, but it was not the necessary condition. Rather, it was the means by which individuals received public recognition for their adult status, and established their adult identity, factors that in turn allowed them to gain full entry as mature individuals into the structure of early modern society.¹²³ As Gouge further outlined, marriage “is the ordinarie way to make them [men and women] masters and mistresses. All these are great dignities, wherein the image and glory of God consisteth”.¹²⁴ It was this understanding, however, that functioned to render lifelong celibacy problematic. The fusion of the concept of celibacy with that of youth allowed younger singles an identity and role in the social hierarchy that befitted their rank and station, but for those whose age increasingly brought them into the adult world, but whose marital status did not, the situation was more problematic - how were older celibates to cement their social identity and reputation as mature adults within the community at large?

There is little doubt that older singles would have been perceived as adults, for adulthood was a process that turned on a number of formal and informal factors, including economic competence, past experience and legal definition. Moreover, the use of the designations “single man” and “single woman” can be interpreted at the most basic level as a recognition of biological maturity. In addition, the ageing process itself served to promote adult status, and lifelong celibates would therefore have been aided in their attempts to gain acceptance as adults by the existence of what Keith Thomas has labelled the “gerontocratic” ideal - the desire to ascribe maturity, self government and wisdom to increasing numerical age, by contrasting its growing distance from the foolishness and irrational period which characterised youth.¹²⁵ Alan Macfarlane has suggested that there was a common assumption that men matured after the age of twenty-five and women after twenty-one, but legal documents reflect a complexity of practice: at canon law, a seventeen-year old boy could act as executor

¹²¹ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 210 (my emphasis).

¹²² R.C. Christie, ed., *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington Volume II, Part II*, Chetham Society, 114 (1886): 369; Jackson, ed., *Abraham de la Pryme*, 3. (my emphasis)

¹²³ K. Thomas, “Age and Authority in Early Modern England”, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976): 226.

¹²⁴ Gouge, *Domesticall*, 210.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

(even if it was not considered wise for him to do so), but contracts with shopkeepers made by individuals under the age of twenty-one were not enforceable in court; the Elizabethan Canon of 1604 established sixteen as the age at which communion was compulsory, and during the reign of James I loyalty oaths (for recusants) were only offered to those over eighteen; the normal age for the termination of female wardship was as early as sixteen, but termination for a male was often determined by the type of tenancy held, twenty-one, for example, being the normal age for a knight.¹²⁶

Moreover, though graduated scales of wage assessments indicate that a variety of ages were used to determine the payment of adult rates, very commonly young people were not paid an adult wage until they reached twenty-four, the same age at which London apprentices could complete their indentures, and also that at which male parish apprenticeships were set for termination. Women, who it was recognised matured earlier, could finish their period of indenture at the age of twenty-one.¹²⁷

Ages stipulated on testamentary bequests also reveal differential notions of adulthood. But while the most favoured age at which a young person was understood to exit adolescence, in the view of Keith Thomas, was that of twenty-four “complete”, women generally gained access to their legacies some years prior to this.¹²⁸

Daughters of the aristocracy, for example, were being paid their portions between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one in the late seventeenth century (most commonly at eighteen), while middle class testators in London allowed their daughters access to legacies on reaching twenty-one or marriage, whichever occurred first.¹²⁹ Moreover, in the parishes of Earls Colne in Essex and Kirkby Lonsdale in Cumbria, daughters were automatically paid their portion on reaching either eighteen or twenty-one, regardless of their marital status.¹³⁰ Young men too may have been granted access to testamentary bequests before the age of twenty-five, but like the situation in Orwell in Cambridgeshire in the seventeenth century, it would have been unusual for sons to have received their legacies before they reached the age of twenty-one.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 214; Thomas, “Age”, 223-4; O’Hara, *Courtship*, 182, fn. 8.

¹²⁷ Thomas, “Age”, 216, 235.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 227. Thomas suggests that it was mistakenly thought that this age corresponded with the age of majority under Roman Law (twenty-five).

¹²⁹ O’Hara, *Courtship*, 169; Earle, *Making*, 187.

¹³⁰ Macfarlane, *Marriage*, 269. Christine Peters has suggested that will clauses increasingly envisaged economic transfer and recognition of adulthood as being related to age rather than marriage. Peters, “Gender”, 91.

¹³¹ Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, 112.

Differential expressions of legal maturity in relation to inheritance practices may have been driven as much by notions of female marriageability as by a belief in advanced female maturity, but it is clear from the foregoing discussion that single men and women over the age of twenty-five would, in legal terms at least, have been regarded as adults.¹³² Economic and social - as opposed to legal - definitions of adulthood, however, were closely entwined with notions of personal and social identity, and therefore relied more heavily on the ability of the individual to conform to dominant understandings of adult behaviour, than their success in achieving an arbitrary numerical age. The notion of adulthood in the case of men, for example, revolved around the concept of self-government, an idea that was closely linked to occupational success and the heading of a household. As Alexandra Shepherd has revealed, "To have the freedom of the town, or to be married, implied the independent status which was the social and economic basis of patriarchal manhood".¹³³ In the urban sector, therefore, public recognition of the apprentice's move towards manhood was signified by his admission to citizenship, and frequently it was a solemn ritual, involving the use of documents, oaths and the payment of fees.¹³⁴ Apprentices like Roger Lowe, the trainee Lancashire mercer who managed to obtain his freedom in 1665, did not consider themselves men either in their own eyes, or in the eyes of their community, until their period of instruction was completed and they could practise

¹³² Moreover, the milestones of independence and adulthood were, as O'Hara has indicated, subject to modification. The proportion of women who received their legacies between the ages of fifteen and nineteen more than tripled over the course of the sixteenth century (18.2 to 57.5 per cent) while the proportion of those accessing their inheritance between the ages of twenty and twenty-four fell by one third (63.6 to 40.9 per cent). In the case of young men, however, the situation was exactly reversed. O'Hara, *Courtship*, Table 10, 175.

¹³³ A. Shepard, "Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c.1580-1640", *Past and Present*, 167 (2000): 96. Economic independence and the heading and provisioning of a household appear to have constituted the most critical elements in the construction of manhood in the Tudor and Stuart periods, but they were not the only ones. Limited access to the patriarchal model of manhood encapsulated in the ideal householder may have forced other single men to draw upon different sources of male prestige usually articulated in terms of excess - strength, violence and prodigality: *ibid.*, 103. Lower down the social scale, the alehouse was a consistent feature of male space, where young men distanced themselves from "the cosy domestic world of childhood and their mother's care, and staked a claim for a place in the ranks of adult men": Griffiths, *Youth*, 207. Manhood was also about peer approval and recognition: E.A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England Honour, Sex and Marriage* (1999), 45. Moreover Katherine Swett has suggested that the construction of manhood for Sir Richard Wynn and his circle was more closely attuned to issues of inheritance and property: Swett, "'Account'", 29.

¹³⁴ A. Yarborough, "Apprentices as Adolescents in Sixteenth Century Bristol", *Journal of Social History*, 13 (1979-80): 75.

their craft or trade and hire apprentices in their own right,¹³⁵ Indeed the taking of an apprentice in itself was a recognised indicator of adult status. Manhood in this context frequently included an element of numerical age - the Statute of Artificers recommend that only householders of at least twenty-four years of age hire apprentices - but it was not unusual to find men taking on an apprentice as soon as they had completed their training, whether or not they were heading a household. Guild ordinances indicate that in some lucrative trades journeymen hired younger apprentices - Martin Goulding, a journeyman joiner in Chester, for example was registered as having two apprentices in 1634 - and William Stout took his first apprentice when he was twenty-six, even though he was boarding at the time with Richard Sterzaker.¹³⁶

Occupational status was also a key element of manhood in the rural sector, for there was clearly a point at which training as a servant in husbandry ended and employment as an adult began. The transition in this case was less visible because there was no public ceremony to mark the occasion, but appears to have been no less significant. Thus in the agricultural parish of Ealing in 1599 the average age of single men described as servants was twenty-one, of those having the dual description of servants and husbandmen, twenty-two, and finally of those described only as husbandmen, twenty-four.¹³⁷ But the ability to take up a position as head of a household also constituted a crucial aspect of adult male identity. Being a householder, as the Statute of Artificers suggested, provided a tangible measure of responsibility and authority, and those who returned home from a period in service to claim land, or to take charge of an estate for ailing parents, then became fully fledged members of the community in their own right. For despite the fact that Ben-Amos has suggested that full integration to adulthood “came only with marriage and the setting up of an independent dwelling group”, the ability to hold local office, pay taxes and vote was dependent not so much upon married status as household ownership.¹³⁸

However, since the marital discourse militated against the notion of female independence in all its forms, the construction of womanhood drew heavily on

¹³⁵ Sachse, ed., *Roger Lowe*, 93. Lowe's adult status came from freedom, financial success and recognition from others: a Yorkshire cloth merchant was willing to extend cloth to him on credit and Thomas Peake offered him a position as a journeyman.

¹³⁶ Woodward, *Men*, 70; Marshall, ed., *William Stout*, 99.

¹³⁷ Allison, *Ealing*.

¹³⁸ I.K. Ben Amos, “Service and the coming of age of young men in seventeenth-century England”, *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), 59.

scriptural and physiological recommendations that offered female maturity almost exclusively in marital terms. As Crawford and Mendelson have indicated, women conceptualised adulthood “mainly in terms of being married, with a household to run, and possibly with children to rear and servants to oversee.”¹³⁹ Moreover, there is evidence of a real preoccupation with marital categorisation. Women not only suffered restricted access to most occupational identities, but found that wherever they were involved in the pursuit of a specific craft or trade they were denied public recognition for it: of all the titles allocated to single women that were surveyed in the course of this research, in only one case was there an attempt to render an occupational classification.¹⁴⁰ Instead, public recognition of female maturity was determined much more directly by the occasion of marriage, signalled, as Chapter Two indicated, by the wearing of certain apparel, the physical separation of married women from their single counterparts in parish churches, and their ability to penetrate the hitherto unknown world of adult female culture. Furthermore, marriage constituted the element that had overriding significance in any determination of social status. As William Gough revealingly remarked, “Among us, if the younger sister be married before the elder, the prehemency and precedence is given to the younger”.¹⁴¹ How then did a rising number of female celibates establish their adult identity within the context of their own communities, and in addition, gain recognition and acceptance for their celibate status?

Unable to utilise the major signifier of womanhood in their quest for community recognition, single women clearly had little choice but to employ alternative strategies in order to win social approval, and those examined in the course of the study appear to have renegotiated their social identity on two main fronts.¹⁴² In the first instance, single women drew extensively on economic definitions of adult status encapsulated within male concepts of maturity. Thus wherever possible they gave themselves occupational roles, assumed responsibility for others and ran independent households. Mary Jackson of Stockport, for example, who ran a

¹³⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, 124.

¹⁴⁰ C.R.O. WC 1690, Sarah Walker of Sutton in Cheshire was described as a buttonmaker. See also Appendix IV, Table A4.2.

¹⁴¹ Gough, *Domesticall*, 210.

¹⁴² New manifestations of manhood that were more compatible with male celibacy may also have emerged. According to David Turner, a stereotype of “libertine” masculinity emerged after the Restoration. It gained full expression in the comedies of the 1670s and celebrated “a virile model of manhood in which debauchery was made consistent with virtue and whoring was declared a means by which a man could actually enhance his reputation among his peers.” Turner, “Robert Foulkes”, 174.

milliner's shop, had a female apprentice in the "Art of Millerie of Bobbinlace weaveing and making".¹⁴³ Margaret Litton, who lodged John Wattson, ten, and Elizabeth Tippet, nine, may have been fostering children on behalf of the local parish, and spinsters like Mary Robson of Ruskington in Lincolnshire and Elizabeth Furnivall of Chelford in Cheshire, who ran busy farming households, used their positions as employers and household heads to signal their adult status.¹⁴⁴ As Claire Cross has suggested, single women living independently in rooms or dwellings had the ability "to have been of some consequence in their localities, and were certainly in a position to wield real influence within their own families."¹⁴⁵

A more important feature of single women's experience in numerical terms, however, and the one that was capable of delivering considerable financial autonomy, was the ability of the single woman to lend money.¹⁴⁶ Chapter Three revealed in detail the rise in the proportion of inventoried spinsters who enjoyed access to capital, and pointed out the significance of their contribution to the operation of the credit market in a period in which coin was limited and liquidity often stretched to the maximum. The involvement of single women in the extension of credit therefore endowed them with a valid reason to remain single that was in addition of tangible benefit to the community at large. Moreover, it provided them with a means to raise their status and authority as individuals. For while Keith Thomas has theorised that advancing age may have been a significant element in raising levels of female authority, the decision of single women to extend capital in the local lending market must also have had considerable potential in terms of increased female agency.¹⁴⁷ Indeed both contemporary commentators and modern historians have recognised the ability of money-lending to alter perceptions of status. Henry Wilkinson's 1625 tract on debt, for example, claimed that whatever the state of the borrower and lender before the extension of credit, the state of being in debt made the borrower "a servant

¹⁴³ C.R.O. WS 1684, Mary Jackson.

¹⁴⁴ Lichfield, 1695, 21; L.A.O. INV 185A/20, 1684, Mary Robson; C.R.O. WS 1685, Elizabeth Furnivall.

¹⁴⁵ Cross, "Northern Women", 85. Property holders like Anne Atkinson of Stanton Lacy in Shropshire, who had a number of male tenants, were likely to find themselves ambivalently placed in the social and gender hierarchy. See Turner, "Robert Foulkes", 183-4.

¹⁴⁶ It may also be possible that moneylending by single women, while increasing their social status, served in addition to make them unpopular, for hostile attitudes to the purveyors of credit remained a feature of the contemporary literature.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, "Age", 235.

to the lender”.¹⁴⁸ The discovery of linkages between status, honour and credit is also a feature of Tim Stretton’s more recent work on the records of the Court of Requests: in his opinion “women made much of their employment, their financial independence and their reputations as moneylenders” during their court appearances.¹⁴⁹

Furthermore, Craig Muldrew’s discussion of the “sociability of credit” in the early modern period has revealed a society in which the need to gain and maintain credit both in a spiritual and material sense was a constant concern.¹⁵⁰ The fact that interpersonal obligations were being continually exchanged and renegotiated as loans were extended and redeemed meant that sources of female power may not have been constant, but the ability to offer credit facilities would clearly have affected perceptions of such power. It is then not without significance that of the three single women discovered in the course of the study to have been granted the honorary title of “Mistress”, all were substantial moneylenders, and all appear to have enjoyed considerable status within their local communities.¹⁵¹

However, the ability of single women to offer credit facilities in the local lending market did not constitute the only factor that served to make their celibate status acceptable within the wider community. For in addition to drawing on concepts of economic independence, single women also adopted archetypal standards of acceptable female behaviour in order to bolster their success. Of the three cardinal virtues associated with femininity - chastity, silence and obedience - chastity remained the most valuable source of honour for single women.¹⁵² Thus Ambrose Barnes, merchant and alderman of Newcastle upon Tyne, in recalling Elizabeth Sharper, a spinster “who was well-respected by all her neighbours, and lived with her sister to a great age unmarried”, implied in his memoirs that her ability to gain social credit had resulted largely from her apparent sexual integrity: “It was whispered she bore a child to another woman’s husband in her younger years. But the report blew

¹⁴⁸ Muldrew, *Economy*, 97-8.

¹⁴⁹ T. Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (1998), 192 (my emphasis).

¹⁵⁰ Muldrew, *Economy*, 123-72.

¹⁵¹ Griffiths, “Joyce Jeffreys”, 1-32; L.A.O. INV 187/15, 1687, Mrs. B. Phillips; L.A.O. INV 190/105, 1691, Mrs. J. Farmery. The will of Jane Farmery has not survived, but Bridget Phillips’ will confirms her single status, and her standing in the community. L.A.O. Stow wills 186, 1687, Bridget Phillips. Significantly, Bridget added no status description to her will; the title “Mrs.” was appended to the inventory by the appraisers.

¹⁵² The need for silence, in particular, was more frequently associated with married women. The term “gossip” was derived from the name for women who were invited to witness the birth of a child. See A Wilson, “The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation”, in Fildes, ed., *Women*, 71.

over and she lived with her sister in good credit many years after.”¹⁵³ There is little doubt that sexual probity remained an integral component of social status regardless of gender. As Bernard Capp has suggested, “Respectable men, like respectable women, valued sexual “honesty” as an intrinsic part of the “good name” that gave them a sense of self-worth and a position of respect within the community.”¹⁵⁴ Amongst women who did not marry, however, sexual probity was of overwhelming significance. The majority of single women - as Chapter Four revealed - appear to have engaged in sexual intercourse only within the context of an existing or forthcoming marriage arrangement, for concepts of honour and credit had an intimate relationship with sexual morality.¹⁵⁵ In this context therefore, the maintenance of chastity appears to have held the key to entry into, and acceptance within, the wider community.

Though the majority of single women were denied an occupational identity, and relatively few succeeded in heading a household, the fact that a high proportion of those among the middling social groups enjoyed access to liquid capital allowed them to renegotiate their social identity by utilising notions of economic independence to signal their maturity, and in the process raise their authority and status within their local setting. Moreover, by adhering to desirable standards of female behaviour they succeeded in consolidating their social inclusion by virtue of their ability to demonstrate evidence of sexual probity. Unfortunately, the combination of these two actions appears to have had serious consequences for the concept of their cultural integration in the long term. Firstly, by incorporating what was previously a major signifier of adult manhood - economic independence - into models of adult womanhood, single women created a major source of instability in the patriarchal system. The fact that other facets of manliness - responsibility, self-sufficiency and neighbourliness - were also encapsulated within the practice of lending only served to

¹⁵³ Barnes claimed she confessed at the age of eighty to “bearing a bastard” and in attempting to atone for her sin, “ript up her belly with a pair of scissors, and pulled her bowells out with her hand”. She was buried in August 1703. See W.H.D. Longstaffe, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes, Late Merchant and Sometime Alderman of Newcastle upon Tyne*, Surtees Society, 50 (1867): 238.

¹⁵⁴ B. Capp, “The Double Standard Revisited: Plebeian Women and Male Sexual Reputation in Early Modern England”, *Past and Present*, 162 (1999): 72.

¹⁵⁵ At least three single women in the later seventeenth century were given the title of “virgin” on their probate inventories: L.A.O. INV 158/38, 1661, Janne Greene; L.A.O. INV 174/222, 1672, Ann Holmes; L.A.O. INV 182/95, 1681, Mary Cartar. In addition Andrew Hann has kindly provided me with thirteen examples of this title being appended in probate material from Kent.

accentuate its destabilising effect.¹⁵⁶ Secondly, and paradoxically, stability was further undermined by the synthesizing of virginity with female adulthood, for the notion of virginity enjoyed considerable discursive power. Elizabeth, as queen, had utilised the concept of virginity in the late sixteenth century to signal her superiority in order to justify her regal position, and the literary praise of virginity was a popular feature in Elizabethan panegyric.¹⁵⁷ According to John Burt, however, the period between 1640 and 1660 witnessed a new discursive interest in the idea and practice of virginity, an interest that had both liberal and radical figurations. The latter figuration was reflected most insistently in the millenarian optimism of religious extremists, who endowed it with the ability to redeem the post-lapsarian world, but in its liberal figuration, too virginity offered a powerful rhetoric of subversion.¹⁵⁸ Maidenly virginity had always been a moral ideal, but only in so far as it provided the best qualification for entry into marriage.¹⁵⁹ Taken to its extreme, however, it came to symbolise freedom from patriarchal control, not only because virginity was understood to be synonymous with celibacy, but also because sexuality formed the touchstone of gender order. The fact that the construction of women as naturally concupiscent represented the primary domain in which patriarchal authority was legitimised, meant that without it the theoretical basis of the need for male domination had been withdrawn.

In addition there were practical problems in maintaining male authority. The limits of female action had constituted a significant source of anxiety for much of the earlier part of the century, but by the Restoration period, as numbers of lifelong spinsters approached their zenith, it was concern with the single woman that reverberated most keenly in the sphere of male authority.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the problem confronting social theorists was that the main thrust of the challenge did not emanate from within the ranks of the promiscuous poor, for whom legislation could provide control, but instead from the more affluent single women of middling status, who

¹⁵⁶ S.D. Amussen, “‘The part of a Christian man’: the cultural politics of manhood in early modern England, in S.D. Amussen and M.A. Kishlansky, eds., *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, (Manchester, 1995), 217.

¹⁵⁷ C. Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (1988), 19; J. Rogers, “The Enclosure of Virginity: The Poetics of Sexual Abstinence in the English Revolution”, in R. Burt, and J.M. Archer, eds., *Enclosure Acts Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England* (1994), 234.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 237-9.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 233.

were experiencing increasing economic autonomy as a result of their access to capital.¹⁶¹ Consequently it was in the sphere of culture that the independence of the seventeenth century spinster received its greatest onslaught.

The development of the single woman as a cultural anathema in the Restoration period is striking. Earlier seventeenth century texts had ridiculed women who *failed* to find husbands, and plays and ballads of this genre remained popular throughout the century, but by the latter half of the period, a variety of other printed material sought in addition to alienate the single woman who deliberately *chose* celibacy over marriage in a specific attempt to bring spinsters within the orbit of patriarchal control.¹⁶² In the first instance, male writers, in adopting a satirical position, attempted to reiterate orthodox gender constructions by presenting the inability of women to obtain sexual satisfaction as the only reason they were likely to have remained single: women were thus *reduced* to consider a preference for celibacy, in opposition to their *natural* desire for marriage. Common tactics involved conflating the failure of women to marry with male indulgence in two popular new vices - tobacco and coffee. The author of *The women's complaint against tobacco*, for instance, "being as yet a Virgin (though it may be contrary to my own will)" claimed she was afraid to marry, fearing to tie herself to a man who should take tobacco and thereby deprive her of "those enjoyments and delights which every woman expects after Marriage". In another example, the characters of Joane and Dorothy, servant maids in a short comedy entitled *The Maiden's Complaint Against Coffee*, both expressed their reluctance to marry men who drank that particular beverage on the grounds that it too rendered them sexually incapacitated.

Joane: I believe the Devil first invented this liquor, on purpose to plague our sex.

Dor: I imagine so too, but rather than I'll dote upon a man that drinks

¹⁶⁰ See for example D. Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England", in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), 116-36.

¹⁶¹ Robert Shoemaker has revealed that twice as many women as men were committed to the House of Correction in late seventeenth-century London, and it is likely that the majority would have been single. R. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment. Petty crime and the law in London and rural Middlesex, c. 1660-1725* (Cambridge, 1991), 184.

¹⁶² See, for example, F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher, *The Maids Tragedie*, which went through at least seven impressions between 1619 and 1686. It told the story of a woman who desired death after being spurned by her troth-plight husband.

Coffee, I am resolved to lead Apes in Hell.

Joane: And Devils too, rather then I will think upon such sots as Hell-burn'd Liquors drink.

Dor: I protest Jone, there's a little comfort in Chocolate, but before I'll fling myself away upon any such dry horson as drinks Coffee, I'll wrap my Maidenhead in my Smock and fling it into the Ocean to be bugger'd to death by young Lobsters.¹⁶³

Secondly, there was an attempt to redefine the boundaries of the marital discourse by normalising marriage as a stage in the lifecycle of the female. Conduct books in particular attempted to make entry into the marital estate a natural process, with *The Batchelor's Directory*, for example, dutifully informing its male readership that,

Tho' a Maid never asks to Marry, because she has modesty, yet there is nothing she desires with greater passion ... It must be confessed likewise that it is her true state, and that there is no better party for her to take.¹⁶⁴

More humorous offerings like *The Maids Complaint* chose instead to attack men for failing in their marital responsibilities. Thus the sexually deprived maids charged young men with being "more Uncharitable than Beasts and Savages to suffer so many plump Virgins to Languish and Pine away with the green-sickness", urging them instead to behave more kindly, "and prevent us from the necessity of running into Nunneries or leading Apes in Hell (both which are so contrary to our inclinations that we dread nothing more)".¹⁶⁵

In addition, efforts to rehabilitate the marriage norm were combined with invective directed specifically against the single woman in order to further anathematise the idea that female celibacy could be permanent. The use of words to encourage a particular mind set was not new - the proverb which threatened women who failed to marry with an eternity of leading apes in hell had been employed from at least the sixteenth century - but as Amy Erickson has pointed out "the invention of

¹⁶³ Anon., *The Maids Complaint Against Coffee* (1663), 3.

¹⁶⁴ Anon., *Batchelors Directory*, Advertisement.

¹⁶⁵ Anon., *The Maids Complaint against the Batchelors* (1675), 4-7.

sneering names for the bitter, twisted, *unwomanly* unmarried woman was a feature of the later seventeenth century".¹⁶⁶ By 1673 it could be asserted with confidence that "an old maid is now thought such a curse as no poetic Fury can exceed ... [and as] the most calamitous creature in Nature".¹⁶⁷ Moreover, by end of the century there had been a shift in the meaning and application of the term "spinster" as concern grew to identify women who existed outside the limits of patriarchal control. Whereas in the early Stuart period this definition appears to have been indicative merely of the fact that the woman in question was single, by the end of the seventeenth century the almost exclusive use of the term on the Lichfield census to denote an unmarried woman *who in addition was not subject to direct male authority*, suggests the possibility of a major shift in social perception.¹⁶⁸

In the final instance, however, male authors sought to counter the autonomy of the single female by redefining the nature of femininity. The gender system in Tudor and early Stuart England had been determined by the establishment of social roles that were grounded in biblical precedent and biological difference. In the second half of the seventeenth century there were numerous attempts to reassert the validity of this definition by widening the discussion of women's natural roles as wives and mothers. Pressure to marry was exerted, as already discussed, through the mechanisms of satire and normalisation, and in addition a veritable explosion of obstetrical textbooks written almost exclusively by men focused on the role of women as reproductive agents within solemnised marriage. At the same time, however, the number of single women was high, and the value of their economic and social contribution as adults becoming increasingly significant. Moreover, in conforming to the classic model of *desirable* female behaviour, and retaining their chastity, single women demonstrated their ability to resist their natural inclinations and in the process circumvent the physiological and biblical directives that had previously necessitated their subjection - the stage was set for a dialectic of ideas that could only be resolved by discursive change.

The first writer to redefine the nature of femininity appears to have been the royalist divine, Richard Allestree.¹⁶⁹ In his text *The Ladies Calling* published in 1673,

¹⁶⁶ Erickson, *Women*, 48.

¹⁶⁷ Cited in Watt, *Rise*, 144.

¹⁶⁸ See Appendix II. There was wider application of the term "bachelor" in addition to that of "spinster" as the seventeenth century progressed.

¹⁶⁹ Fletcher, *Gender*, 383-5.

he reasserted the political importance of the male-dominated household, and viciously attacked the concept of the “old maid”. Furthermore, by drawing on newer psychological as well as physiological understandings of female behaviour, Allestree astutely incorporated the idea of the civic virgin into the realm of male subjection.¹⁷⁰ He offered women a much more positive version of themselves, by indicating his belief that God had implanted in them “some native propensions which ... do much facilitate the operations of Grace upon them”.¹⁷¹ Women were no longer entirely at the mercy of their lascivious desires, but born instead with such “natural” virtues as meekness, compassion, affability and piety; men, on the other hand, were endowed with the traits of strength, reason and courage. Thus in making a distinction between inherently masculine and feminine virtues, and insisting those of women were naturally inferior to those of men, Allestree signalled the basis of a new system of subordination that was equally applicable to women *regardless* of their sexual or marital status - to “Women in all Ages and circumstances of their lives”.¹⁷² Other writers seized upon the value of such notions, with George Saville the Marquis of Halifax, in particular, using the concept of natural inferiority to develop an adept and forceful argument in defence of male authority.¹⁷³ By the early eighteenth century therefore, conduct manuals had conspired to outline the basis for a new system of subordination, predicated not upon the traditional demands of sexuality or scriptural doctrine, but instead around new understandings of “natural” female inclinations.

¹⁷⁰ Allestree was a close friend of Thomas Willis, the Oxford-trained physician who pioneered the theory that women’s behaviour was brain-directed rather than womb-directed. This “neurocentric” model (developed by Willis and a number of others from the late 1660s), in the view of Robert Martensen, “naturalized social norms that were valued by a male subculture of scientific and religious leaders preoccupied with hierarchy, control and efficiency”. R. Martensen, “The Transformation of Eve: Women’s Bodies, Medicine and Culture in Early Modern England”, in Porter and Teich, eds., *Sexual Knowledge*, 128.

¹⁷¹ Allestree, *Ladies*, Preface.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 4. Many of Allestree’s ideas were highly traditional. Sir Thomas Smith, for example, had suggested over a century earlier that “nature hath forged each part to his office, the man sterner, strong, bould, adventures, negligent of his beautie, and spending. The woman weake, fearefull, faire, curious of her bewtie and saving”. Smith, *De Republica*, 22. Nevertheless, according to Fletcher, Allestree provided “the first coherent account of female gender construction in largely secular terms”: Fletcher, *Gender*, 384. Moreover, his arguments coincided with the beginning of the transition from the “one-body” model of sexual difference, characteristic of Galenic medical theory, to the more modern “two-body” model, which also functioned to define women as fundamentally different from men. See Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 45-9.

¹⁷³ Saville, *New Year Gift*, 26. More traditional attitudes remained a feature of popular misogynist literature, with Richard Ames, for example, suggesting women were composed of “nothing else but Lechery”. See [Ames], *Folly*, 7.

VI. Summary

The effects of a dominant notion of celibacy articulated in terms of a stage in the lifecycle process were wide-ranging and influential. Celibacy as a product of youth was an accepted and expected feature of life in a hierarchical society governed by rank, age and status, and as such, lifecycle celibates were an integrated feature of the early modern socio-economic system, and vital to its continued success. However, this success depended on a regimented system of adulthood geared to scriptural authority and biological destiny. Heavily informed by contemporary understandings on the proper role and status of males and females in early modern society, ideas about celibacy for single women dovetailed neatly into those of marriage to promote a cultural stereotype of women as destined primarily for matrimonial domesticity. Such understandings in their turn facilitated the imposition of a range of economic and social measures designed to reduce the ability of women to gain financial autonomy and discourage social independence.

The concept of *lifecycle* celibacy for single women offered no significant challenge to the existing social system - the notions of wives, daughters and servants was entirely compatible with a model of female subordination - but that of *lifelong* celibacy functioned to deliver a major shock to cultural perceptions of male authority. Fears about the political and economic ramifications of high rates of singleness were not articulated exclusively in female terms, as Chapter Three suggested, but single men as celibates offered no comparable threat to the cultural integrity of the early modern gender system, for manhood itself turned on a range of social and economic indicators, of which marriage was only one. Conversely, the strength of the link between adulthood and marriage in definitions of female maturity ensured single women had restricted access to adult identity. By adopting prescriptive standards of behaviour and usurping one of the primary signifiers of the adult male - financial independence - single women were able to renegotiate their adult identity and gain social acceptance for their celibate status. In the process, however, they introduced major elements of instability into patriarchal theory that threatened to undermine the uniqueness and validity of male authority.

Under the weight of pressure from demographic, economic and social change, ideas about celibacy had broadened to incorporate a model of lifelong singleness alongside the dominant construction of celibacy as a lifecycle phenomenon. Yet the articulation of lifelong celibacy for women and its conceptualisation remained

incompatible with existing cultural norms. As a result, single women in the later Stuart period were ridiculed, anathematised, and ultimately desexualised - the notion of lifelong female celibacy was encompassed within a rhetoric of exclusion that was to reach its most vitriolic in the texts of the eighteenth century.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ S.S. Lanser, "Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid", in Bennett and Froide, eds., *Singlewomen*, 297-323.

Conclusion

By the mid-seventeenth century, the demographic growth that had been such a prominent feature of the sixteenth century English landscape had completely abated, and population levels had entered into a period of stagnation that was to persist for much of the remaining century. But while mortality rates and expectation of life at birth underwent deterioration over the century as a whole, only during the third quarter of the century did mortality seriously rival fertility in terms of its ability to direct the course of population change: during the remainder of the century it was through the mechanism of fertility that the pattern of growth was affected. Early attempts at reconstitution intimated that this may have been caused by shifts in levels of marital fertility, but subsequent investigations revealed little long-term change in fertility patterns within marriage between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Neither was it possible to explain deteriorating levels of fertility by recourse to shifts in the average age at which women were first married. Slight increases in this area can be detected, but while the combination of higher levels of mortality, a fall in marital fertility and a higher average age for women at first marriage may have been responsible for the period of stagnation visible in the later seventeenth century, such changes were of insufficient magnitude to initiate the fertility decline in the early seventeenth century that was capable of halting population growth. On the basis of current knowledge, the best and most likely explanation for the depressed levels of fertility in the first half of the seventeenth century then has to be the parallel decline in the rate of marriage.

Given the strength of the marriage discourse in early modern England such a decline appears at first to have been counter-intuitive. Shifts in marriage theory, identified first in the writings of the sixteenth century humanists and incorporated swiftly into early protestant thought, had sought to raise the profile of marriage above that of celibacy both for the benefit of the individual and for society at large. Indeed, the discourse of marriage, bolstered as it was by a range of other discursive structures (most visibly those of religion, medicine, gender and sexuality), has been revealed as a potent force in the Tudor and Stuart periods, of crucial value in the construction of marriage as a lifecycle event that was necessary, desirable and ultimately inevitable. There were a few exceptions to this protestant marital ideal, which in the early

seventeenth century at least were formulated most commonly in terms of physical or sexual incapacity, but marriage continued to enjoy a unique position in seventeenth-century English culture as the epitome of, and route to, personal and social success.

However, the marriage discourse also contained within it a number of tensions that served to sanction and even encourage prolonged periods of celibacy under certain circumstances, the most significant of which was formulated in terms of economics. Under the prevailing system of household creation, in which marriage was linked to the foundation of a new unit, the factor having most influence on decisions to marry - for the great majority of the population at least - was the cost involved in the establishment and maintenance of that unit. Consequently individuals were encouraged to prepare the financial ground for marriage from an early age, and enter into it only when, as adults, they had managed to accumulate the necessary resources and undergone sufficient training (appropriate to their gender and status) to enable them to do so. An inability to do so therefore served to render them incapable, both in the short term and the long, of entering the marital estate.

The understanding that economic stability was a key factor in contemporary marriage strategies has greatly influenced modern analyses of change. Thus the dominant explanation in terms of the historiography remains that of Wrigley and Schofield, whose concept of homeostatis, articulated in terms of a negative feedback model in which a fall in real wages was followed by a decline in the marriage rate, has proved extremely influential, if not without its critics. Certainly the inability to accumulate was likely to have impacted heavily upon a growing proportion of the population under the conditions of economic malaise and demographic expansion that prevailed during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In addition there is evidence to suggest that a number of institutional pressures, also arising largely out of economic concerns, operated to prevent entry into marriage if provision appeared unsatisfactory. Accordingly, historians such as Steve Hindle and Ralph Houlbrooke have preferred to incorporate economic elements into a social control model in which those considered to have insufficient resources for the setting up and management of a household were denied the opportunity to marry.

Yet other models, which reflect the effects on sex ratios of migration, emigration, war and disease, are consistent with a further tension in the marital discourse - the emphasis on the need for a careful choice. For by upholding the estate

of marriage as one of lifelong commitment from which only death could provide release, the discourse of marriage encouraged the delineation of a theory of marital choice that sought to ensure the long-term viability of the partnership, both for the benefit of the individual and of the community at large. In point of fact, the articulation of a theory of marital choice may have had unintentional ramifications in terms of marriage levels in that it offered individuals a base from which to challenge not only the choice of marriage partner, but also the choice to marry *per se*. Historians have felt justified in explaining shifts in marriage rates in terms consonant with the marriage discourse (i.e., in terms of failure), but have been decidedly more reluctant to consider the possibility that there was a growing antipathy towards marriage during the course of the seventeenth century, especially in relation to women. Nevertheless the choice to remain celibate was on the seventeenth century agenda, and discussion of the single life for women in the civic sphere as an alternative to marriage broadened considerably in the post-war period. Furthermore, as Chapter Three was able to demonstrate, for women with liquid capital this would have been a realistic choice, and not merely during the latter part of the century. Access to a cash portion, historically constructed as the prime indicator of marriageability, thus took on a significance, at least in the short term, that was diametrically opposed to wedlock. It remains unclear as to what extent celibacy was a function of individual choice or community need: the importance of cash in the local credit market requires that any analysis of lending motivation take into account in addition the financial needs of family, friends and even the local community, all of whom may have had a stake in the further extension of celibacy. Moreover, celibacy may have been as much a function of lending as a determinant of it. Even if female lenders made no conscious decision to remain celibate in the long term, the high level of demand for credit facilities and the probability of at least some measure of default may have occasioned an ongoing process of marital deferment culminating in the point at which a number of women became, in Laslett's terminology, "older, unmarried and now largely unmarriageable".¹ Regardless of the mechanisms involved in the retention of celibacy in the long term, however, the fact that money-lending and marriage - at least as far as women were concerned - were largely incompatible,

¹ Laslett, *World*, 51.

ensured that lending constituted a destabilising force in the English seventeenth century demographic regime.

The ability of lending to operate in this manner reflects a further facet of the marital discourse, for fertility decline was assured by the strength of the proscription on ante-nuptial intercourse. Though the full amount of extra-marital coition remains obscured by an imperfect understanding of the extent of contraception, abortion and infanticide, it seems likely - on the strength of the available data - that individuals in general, and women in particular, did not engage in procreative sex unless they were married, or were expecting to marry in the near future. Such repression was achieved largely through the institutional manifestations of the marriage discourse in the shape of the church and state which in turn received sanction and support at individual and community level, but it was also driven by notions of honour and status that gave precedence and preferment to the estate of marriage. Yet while restricted access to sexual intercourse had clear ramifications in terms of fertility levels, the implications of the marriage discourse for the overall extent of sexual satisfaction among single people are less clear. Male narratives that allocate primacy to penetrative intercourse deny both the existence and value of the alternative sexual practices that were available to single individuals in the context of seventeenth century society, and more especially in the case of women. Moreover, it is not difficult to link the early eighteenth century moral panic over a perceived increase in masturbatory practices and a developing interest in homosexual behaviour to concerns about high levels of celibacy.

The effectiveness of the discourse of marriage in circumscribing the opportunities of single women in the sexual arena to a greater extent than their male counterparts can be extended to numerous other aspects of seventeenth century life. The construction of marriage as a life-cycle phenomenon ensured that opportunities for men and women in the economic sphere were geared towards preparation for adulthood. Gendered approaches to training and development offered men the chance to gain economic independence through a process of occupational instruction in readiness for a position as head of a household. Women, on the other hand, defined in relation to their domestic rather than occupational potential, rarely received training in any area outside household management. Work, where it was available, was therefore low paid, marginal and often of a temporary or seasonal nature, and since it was a

common understanding that marriage was the ultimate destiny of most if not all women, their access to productive resources was determined more often by their future position than their present one: relatively few single women were lucky enough to hold land, property or even an adequate amount of livestock.

In addition, the problematic nature of female sexuality functioned to ensure that single women were largely denied social as well as economic independence. In a cultural climate that was bounded by male property ownership and driven by negative constructions of the single female, access to independent living accommodation, though it may have been on the increase, remained the preserve of relatively few single women in seventeenth century England. In the final reckoning, however, the marriage discourse sought to restrict female celibacy most effectively by denying single women access to an adult identity outside the marital paradigm. For while manhood was formulated around a number of factors of which marriage was only one alternative, womanhood was constructed almost exclusively in relation to marriage. The rise in the proportion of women who never married, however, could not fail to hold significant implications for the integrity of this construction, for regardless of the nature of the influences on marriage decisions, the mere fact that they found themselves participating in an extended period of celibacy required women to fashion an alternative personal and social identity that did not draw its honour and status from the idea and practice of marriage. Yet the fact that such ideas were at odds with existing models of womanhood served to undermine perceptions of a stable and well ordered society. Consequently social theorists had little option but to reassert the value of marriage for women, and develop new ways to restrict the idea and practice of lifelong female celibacy. The resulting process of identification and exclusion witnessed the unleashing of a negative stereotype of the spinster as an “old maid”, and her relegation to the margins of society.

Modern explanations of seventeenth century marriage behaviour, heavily influenced by contemporary argument, have focussed at length on the strength of the relationship between marriage and economics. But while it is clear that both marriage and celibacy - filtered through the marital discourse - were in constant dialogue with economics in seventeenth century England, the relationship between them was far more complex than current theories allow. The inability to accumulate may have occasioned a rational decision in favour of celibacy or alternately elicited the

disapproval of the local parish authorities, but celibacy could also be a function of access to capital, especially if the owner was female and was involved in money-lending activities. More significantly, however, a preoccupation with the economic background to the declining marriage rates has prevented historians from fully appreciating the relationship between the marriage discourse and celibacy in seventeenth century England.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, when marriage rates were declining dramatically, there is little evidence of concern over the rising proportion of single people. Tensions within the discourse, which were predicated upon the idea of economic self-sufficiency, allowed it to accommodate high levels of extended celibacy, and even functioned to demand celibacy under conditions of economic exigency. Therefore while social and economic pressures arising out of demographic expansion and its concomitant inflation worked jointly and cumulatively to lower wages, increase the demand for credit facilities, and induce subsistence migration, all of which functioned to reduce marital opportunity, such problems were easily accommodated within a belief system that stressed the inevitability of marriage in the long term, even if this facilitated a process of ongoing delay that eventually resulted in a lifetime of celibacy. Within this system marriage could remain *de jure* the pinnacle of social and individual achievement, while *de facto* a rising number of marriages failed to come to fruition.

By the later seventeenth century the economic difficulties of the pre-war period had largely evaporated. Demographic expansion had ceased, inflationary pressures stabilised, and marriage rates were at last beginning to recover. Yet at the same time the notion of celibacy had broadened to include a lifelong element. The belief in the existence of a growing trend amongst single men towards permanent bachelorhood was addressed in conduct literature, letters, pamphlets, broadsides and ballads, and in the final decade of the century attempts were made to reduce its incidence at least in part through the fiscal system. But it was the idea of female celibacy that was to prove most subversive. The choice by women to remain unmarried received little direct discussion in the writings of male contemporaries, but the appearance of a number of proto-feminist writings underscores the significance of the challenge to the integrity of the marital discourse. The articulation of lifelong celibacy for women as an element of choice in the wake of the mid-century conflict

served only to heighten concern over the decline in marital fertility at a point in time when a developing spirit of statistical enquiry sought to highlight the significance of demographic expansion for the continued political and economic security of the nation. Moreover, the fact that it was accompanied, in many cases, by the ability of single women to enjoy economic independence and greater autonomy, occasioned in no small measure by their greater participation in the credit market, offered further cause for concern. As a result there was a renewed discursive focus on the value, desirability and necessity of marriage for women, and greater attempts to identify and exclude the lifelong spinster by a process of cultural anathematisation.

To wholly appreciate the impact of a rise in female celibacy on seventeenth-century English culture, however, requires a consideration of the ramifications of the challenge to the marriage discourse in terms of its effect on related discursive structures, most notably that of gender. For attempts by single women to renegotiate their adult identity and gain acceptance within society struck at the very heart of male authority, and thus at the basis of the gender hierarchy. Such action in turn elicited a major discontinuity in the discourse of gender as the construction of femininity shifted in order to incorporate single independent women within the orbit of patriarchal control. Lending by single women in this context therefore appears not only as a destabilising element in the demographic regime, but one that was also capable of subverting the stability of the entire socio-cultural system. Historians have argued that unmarried women held an insignificant place in the world of early modern England.² In future such arguments will prove difficult to sustain.

² Whyman, *Sociability*, 113.

Appendix I

The sample

1. The designation of celibates.

This study was prompted by the desire to investigate the lives of celibates in seventeenth century England - here defined simply as those individuals who had never married - and the reasons that may have accounted for their celibate status. In the course of the study it has therefore been assumed that individuals were single if they appeared in the source material under one or more of the following definitions: single, single woman, maid (or derivative), spinster, servant (or derivative), virgin, apprentice, single man, bachelor. However, there are a number of difficulties associated with these designations. The use of the description “single” in modern terminology, for example, is somewhat ambiguous, for it is frequently used to indicate simply that the individual in question has no current partner, regardless of whether that person has or has not been married before. The use of the term “single” in this manner cannot be entirely ruled out in early modern England. In the will of William Coo of Sudbury, for example, he is described as a single man, but the fact that he bequeathed his wife’s cloak, safeguard, hood and pillion cloth to his sister suggests otherwise.¹ Anne Green of Southelmham All Saints in Suffolk, who had a tenement and lands in St. Michaels parish, Southelmham, and left goods to four sons and two daughters, was also described on her will as single.² Without more background detail, it is impossible to know why either of these individuals chose to define themselves as single on their probate documents, but fortunately such examples appear to have been rare; marriage and the lifecycle were closely entwined, and existence was conceptualised largely in terms of a three stage process (i.e., singleness, marriage and widowhood). The use of other status definitions such as “maid” and “virgin” could also involve some ambiguity, but they too seem to appear in the probate material in the form of lifecycle descriptions, and there is no evidence to suggest that either was used as a stand-alone definition for married women or widows.

¹ Evans, ed., *Wills* 35, 143.

² M.E. Allen, ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk 1625-26*, Suffolk Record Society, 37 (1995), 163.

There are other potential sources of error. Apprentices were prohibited from marrying during the period of their indentures, and servants too were expected to remain single while in service, typically marrying after they had left.³ But servants and apprentices may not always have been unmarried. Wrigley, for example, has revealed that in the last four decades of the sixteenth century there were a number of marriages recorded in the Colyton register where either the groom or the bride was said to be a servant, and married apprentices appear in the records of mid sixteenth-century London and late seventeenth-century Newcastle. Yet the vast bulk of apprentices were likely to have remained single throughout the period of their indenture, and as Wrigley has suggested, and the work of Ann Kussmaul had confirmed, servants were invariably single and remained so until the institution of service began to disappear.⁴

A further difficulty arises in respect of the uncertainty surrounding the use of the term “spinster”, for it was not always reserved expressly for use in conjunction with unmarried women. Consequently, a detailed discussion of the use of the term “spinster” has been included in Appendix II. The use of this term increased in significance over the course of the seventeenth century, however, and it enjoyed near-universal application in the Cheshire material. Women appended with this designation are therefore believed to have been single unless there is other evidence to indicate the contrary.

A number of women whose surnames include the use of an alias have also been incorporated within the sample. These include, for instance, Ellen Moore als (alias) Kent, spinster of Sandbach in Cheshire and Anne Street als Strettell, spinster, of Nether Knutsford, also in Cheshire.⁵ Despite the fact that Laura Gowing has suggested that an alias in the court records was usually employed to denote a married women’s maiden name or previous married names, they also appear to have been adopted in the case of stepchildren. Once again, therefore, unless there is evidence to

³ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence*, 32-3; Kussmaul, *Servants*, 83.

⁴ E.A. Wrigley, “The Changing Occupational Structure of Colyton over Two Centuries”, *Local Population Studies*, 18 (1977): 20, 21 fn 7. See also Kussmaul, *Servants*, 79. Twenty-one out of two thousand apprentice carpenters in mid-sixteenth century London were married, and at Newcastle one apprentice joiner and three bricklayers were each fined the sum of £2 for marrying before their period of indenture had been completed. See Woodward, *Men*, 59.

⁵ C.R.O. WI 1637, Ellen Moore als Kent; C.R.O. WI 1667, Anne Street als Strettell.

the contrary, spinsters and single women with an alias are assumed to have been single.⁶

Finally, the sample includes two probate inventories from Lincolnshire in which the testator was described as a “young man”. Such examples are rare, but were included on this basis that two further probate documents of Lincolnshire male singles - in this case wills - suggest that the definition of “young man” was likely to have been reserved for those who were single. Moreover, as Chapter Five reveals, the hierarchical nature of Tudor and Stuart society, combined with the fact that celibacy was constructed as a lifecycle phenomenon, ensured that the notions of youth and singleness often overlapped.

2. The sample outlined

The core of the primary probate material used in the course of the study has been extracted from the county repositories of Lincolnshire and Cheshire, largely on the basis of their indexing systems. Relatively few repositories have index systems that provide easy access to documents that need to be differentiated by marital status over a given period of time. At the Lincolnshire Archive Office, which holds probate records from the Archdeaconry Court of Stow, the court of the Dean and Chapter at Lincoln, the Lincoln Consistory Court and numerous prebendary courts, wills, inventories and administration bonds - the three types of probate document created in the early modern period - are all filed separately. It has therefore been possible to examine neither the wills of single individuals, since they are indexed alphabetically in a series of printed volumes covering the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nor the inventories created in the Lincoln Consistory Court for those who died intestate (LCC Admon. series), which are indexed according to place. However, the Inv. series, which contains probate inventories created as a direct result of a will, is indexed chronologically, and includes details of marital and occupational status. Moreover, it is a list of all the inventories that are held in the record office, regardless of court jurisdiction. This index was scrutinized, and inventories were extracted if they had one or more of the designations mentioned earlier. As a result, the inventories of 378 single men and 273 single women were discovered in the Inv. series between 1601 and 1700, to which were added the inventory of one single

⁶ See Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, under “Conventions and Abbreviations”.

female and one single male from the LCC Admon. series, documents that had already been identified. A grand total of 653 probate inventories therefore makes up the Lincoln sample, 274 of which are female (listed in Appendix VI) and 379 of which are male (listed in Appendix VII). The number of each of the specified designations in the final sample can be found in Appendix IV, Tables A4.1 and A4.2.

In the case of Cheshire, all the probate material created by the Consistory Court of Chester that is relevant to any one individual is filed together, and indexed on a database that includes occupational and marital parameters. Searches were therefore made under the same categories used in the creation of the Lincoln sample. Unfortunately wills and inventories do not survive in every case; probate documents in the Cheshire collection that only included a letter of administration or an administration bond were therefore discarded. Furthermore, although the selection process isolated probate documents for a total of 514 single individuals, because only 29 of these belonged to single males, these too were discarded in favour of a Cheshire sample that included only the remaining 485 female testators. A comprehensive list of those included is available in Appendix V.

The Cheshire sample contains a range of combinations of probate material as indicated in Table A1.1 below, including a number of oral or nuncupative wills, uttered when the testator was at the point of death.⁷

Table A1.1: Type and number of documents in the Cheshire sample.

Type of document	Number
Inventory only	59
Will only	85
Will and inventory	302
Will only (nuncupative)	16
Will and inventory (nuncupative)	23
Total	485

In addition, probate collections are filed under four categories in the Cheshire repository: supra wills for estates £40 and over; infra wills for those less than £40; contested wills for those in dispute; and registered wills, in which the copy from the original will entered in the Bishop’s Register is the only surviving copy.

Table A1.2 below indicates the relative numbers of each of these in the Cheshire sample.

Table A1.2: Number of probate documents in each category of the Cheshire Record Office collection in the final sample.

Collection	Reference	Number
Supra Wills (£40 or over)	WS	373
Infra Wills (less than £40)	WI	87
Contested Wills	WC	23
Registered Wills	EDA	2
Total		485

The distribution and number of probate documents in the final grand sample, which includes both the Lincolnshire and Cheshire documentation, is outlined in the table below.

⁷ Nuncupative wills, which only permitted the disposition of the testator’s moveable estate, were seen largely as a makeshift measure, undertaken by the poorest of testators in an emergency. See S. Coppel, “Willmaking on the deathbed”, *Local Population Studies*, 40 (1988): 38-9.

Table A1.3: Distribution and number of probate documents in the final sample, 1601-1700.

Decade	Lincolnshire men	Lincolnshire women	Cheshire women
1601-10	39	18	18
1611-20	56	38	35
1621-30	42	41	41
1631-40	45	43	36
1641-50	10	6	32
1651-60	3	1	4
1661-70	57	44	87
1671-80	60	36	80
1681-90	42	24	85
1691-1700	25	23	67
Total	379	274	485

3. The identification of celibates.

Having considered the problem of the accuracy of the designations used to determine celibacy during the seventeenth century, it is also important to consider to what extent those who never married can be recovered in the historical record (i.e., how many were identified by their marital status). Single women are relatively easy to distinguish in the surviving documentation, for the men who created the written records were more frequently concerned with the marital status of the women with whom they came into contact than the nature of their employment. Descriptions appended to single men, on the other hand, were marked much more clearly by references to occupational or social status, and thus identification of the full range of male singles in the surviving records is more problematic. Such practices have clear implications for the recovery of material relating specifically to single individuals.

Therefore in order to assess more accurately the extent to which the probate records of singles in the Tudor and Stuart periods can be recovered by recourse to marital status, wills from nine printed collections were examined in addition to more than three decades of manuscript wills surviving in the Lincolnshire Archive Office.

All the collections used were complete for the periods covered. Each will was read in its entirety, and as a rule of thumb, testators were defined as single if their wills made no reference to wives, husbands, children or grandchildren. Such guidelines are not foolproof - a woman may have pre-deceased her husband without surviving issue - but they offer a window onto a wider range of early modern celibates than mere marital designation allows. The results are displayed in Table A1.4 below.

Table A1.4: Use of marital designations in a selection of Tudor and Stuart probate material.

Will collection	Wills	Singles	Desig. singles	Male singles	Male desig. singles	% of male desig. singles	Female singles	Female desig. singles	% of female desig. singles
Suffolk 1620-24	784	104	7	79	2	3	25	5	20
Suffolk 1625-26	424	63	22	48	8	17	15	14	93
Sudbury 1630-35	894	99	49	64	19	30	35	30	86
Sudbury 1636-38	576	66	33	49	18	37	17	15	88
S. Cave 1552-1642	215	27	4	17	4	24	10	0	0
Bristol 1546-1603	192	18	4	14	1	7	4	3	75
Darlington 1600-25	58	4	1	2	0	0	2	1	50
Stockport 1578-1650	118	11	4	7	0	0	4	4	100
Lincoln 1630-3	1446	126	40	98	21	21	28	17	63
Uffculme 1580-1700	273	30	11	20	4	36	10	7	64
Total	4980	548	175	398	77	19%	150	96	64%

Sources: M.E. Allen, ed., *Wills of the Archdeacon of Suffolk 1620-24*, Suffolk Record Society, 31 (1989).

- ed., *Wills of the Archdeacon of Suffolk 1625-26*, Suffolk Record Society, 37 (1995).

- N. Evans, ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1630-35*, Suffolk Record Society, 29 (1987).
- ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1636-38*, Suffolk Record Society, 35 (1993).
- J. Kaner, ed., *"Goods and Chattels" 1552-1642 Wills, Farm and Household Inventories from the Parish of South Cave in the East Riding of Yorkshire* (Hull, 1994).
- S. Lang and M. McGregor, eds., *Tudor Wills proved in Bristol 1546-1603*, Bristol Record Society, 44 (1993).
- J.A. Atkinson, B. Flynn, V. Portass, K. Singlehurst and H.J. Smith, eds., *Darlington Wills and Inventories, 1600-1625*, Surtees Society, 201 (1993).
- C.B. Phillips and J.H. Smith, eds., *Stockport Probate Records 1578-1619*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 124 (1985).
- eds., *Stockport Probate Records 1620-1650*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 131 (1992).
- P. Wyatt, ed., *The Uffculme Wills and Inventories 16th to 18th Centuries*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series, 40 (1997).
- L.A.O. LCC (will) series, 1630-1633.

Table A1.4 indicates that the proportion of unmarried men that can be identified solely by reference to their marital designation in the surviving probate material is very low - on average about nineteen per cent of all male singles - and therefore requires that any conclusions drawn with regard to male celibates identified in this way should be treated with caution. The much higher proportion of single women who were given marital designations, however, on average around sixty-four per cent of all female singles, offers much greater potential for generalisation; consequently the main focus of analysis has been concentrated around the experiences of single women.

4. The sample as representative.

Not all individuals in the early modern period made a will. Moreover, estimates of the number of those who did so vary enormously, from less than five per

cent in some areas up to as much as forty-five per cent in others.⁸ Survival of documents also restricts the representativeness of any sample, for as a general rule it is common to find that some sort of probate document survives for only one in four or one in five of those eligible to make a will.⁹ Just what percentage of the surviving total were likely to belong to single men at present remains speculative, but Amy Erickson's survey of existing probate studies has allowed her to estimate that around one twenty-fifth of all surviving wills had been drawn up by single female testators.¹⁰

Yet even if all the probate documents made by singles had survived, they would still fail to offer the historian a faithful cross section of early modern celibates. Firstly, and most significantly, despite the great rise in the proportion of the population that did not marry during the course of the seventeenth century, the majority still did. Most individuals would therefore have passed through the single stage in their lives without the need to create a probate document. Secondly, studies involving the use of probate material in local record offices are usually restricted to the broad middling band of society. The very poor could not afford the process of probate - wills were costly to produce and costly to prove, and an inventory was only required if the estate was worth more than £5, (although smaller estates were occasionally appraised) - and the very rich often had their wills proved in the higher courts of Canterbury or York.¹¹ In terms of the overall nature of the source material employed in the course of the project, however, a concentration on the probate material of the middling strata of Tudor and Stuart society may be less of a problem than might at first be expected, since the bulk of the printed literature used to reflect contemporary ideas and values would also have been directed most keenly towards those of middling status. Nevertheless, testators were also more likely to be among the older members of the community and more usually male: even though single men in the Lincolnshire documents were directly identified in terms of their marital status

⁸ Erickson, *Women*, 32.

⁹ In the Devonshire community of Uffculme probate documents survive for around twenty-five per cent of the adult population. See P. Wyatt, ed., *The Uffculme Wills and Inventories 16th to 18th Centuries*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 40 (1997): xviii. Probate inventories survive for approximately a fifth of all adult males in Market Rasen between 1597 and 1602. See D. Neave, ed., *Tudor Market Rasen Life and Work in a Sixteenth Century Market Town illustrated by Probate Inventories* (WEA, 1985), 3. In the ancient Lincolnshire parish of Clee between 1536 and 1742 on average twenty-eight per cent of adult males and seven per cent of adult females left probate inventories, in total than one fifth of the adult population. See R.W. Ambler and B. and L. Watkinson, eds., *Farmers and Fishermen The Probate Inventories of the Ancient Parish of Clee, South Humberside, 1536-1742* (Hull, 1987), 4.

¹⁰ Erickson, *Women*, 204.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

less frequently than their female counterparts, fifty-eight per cent of all the singles inventories in the Lincoln material still belonged to men.

Finally, it must be said that evidence collected from the probate records of single people can say little about the reasons why they remained single, for there is no way of knowing when such decisions were taken. None of the wills examined offered direct information on difficulties concerning choice of partner, and though inventories can be used to calculate levels of personal wealth, their usefulness is compromised by a lack of information on the distance between the point at which the decision not to marry was taken, and the point at which the testator died. While a man, for example, may have been insufficiently wealthy to marry in his late twenties, if he had continued life as a bachelor and died much later in his fifties, his financial situation may well have improved significantly. Conversely a woman with access to a relatively comfortable portion in her mid twenties, may on reaching her dotage, have been less financially secure. (In addition the experiences of either could, of course, have been reversed). Difficulties of this nature are compounded by the fact that there is rarely any direct evidence of age on testamentary material, and probate documents of celibates, unlike their married counterparts, offer few indicators of position in the lifecycle (e.g., references to children or grandchildren).

5. The rise in single women's probate documents.

Though Amy Erickson has indicated that the proportion of single women's probate documents as a percentage of all women's documents changed little over the early modern period, evidence presented here suggests that as a proportion of all probate documents (i.e., male and female), the percentage of those that survive for single women may have expanded over the course of the seventeenth century.¹² This certainly appears to have been the case in terms of record survival at the Cheshire and Norfolk repositories. Taking first the county of Cheshire, there was a threefold rise in the proportion of probate documents in which the testator was defined as a "spinster" between 1601 and 1700, as demonstrated in Table A1.5. It was not possible to calculate the percentage rise in single women's probate documents in its entirety, since the information provided in Table A1.5 was provided by the Cheshire Record Office and relates only to the records of those designated as spinsters. Nevertheless,

¹² *Ibid.*, 204.

because by far the majority of the Cheshire single women were designated in this manner, the figures have been used to provide a rough guide to the changing incidence of single women's probate documents in the Cheshire collection. It should be noted however, that the term became more popular as the century progressed, which will overemphasise to a small extent the expansion in the proportion of single women's documents as a percentage of the whole. Nevertheless, the rise in the proportion of such documents is clearly visible.

Table A1.5: Spinsters probate documents as a proportion of all probate documents surviving in the Cheshire Record Office between 1601 and 1700.¹³

Decade	Total number of probate documents	Number of spinsters' probate documents	Spinsters' probate documents as % of all such documents
1601-10	1764	20	1.1
1611-20	2335	36	1.5
1621-30	2159	41	1.9
1631-40	2309	40	1.7
1641-50	1852	39	2.1
1661-70	3145	94	3
1671-80	3045	84	2.8
1681-90	3263	91	2.8
1691-1700	2530	87	3.4
Total	22542	535	

Source: Chester Record Office Will database.

Moreover, the rise in the proportion of spinsters' probate documents surviving in the Cheshire Record Office is mirrored in that of Norfolk. In point of fact, analysis of the index of probate documents in the Norfolk Record Office between 1611 and 1680 (from the volume published by the Norfolk Record Society), indicates a rise of even greater magnitude: between 1611-20 and 1671-80 the proportion of women's probate

records, as indicated in Table 1.6, rose by a factor of 2.4, whereas in Cheshire over the same period the records only increased by a factor of 1.9.

Table A1.6: Probate documents of single females as a proportion of all probate documents surviving in the Norfolk record office between 1611 and 1680.¹⁴

Decade	Number of wills	Number of wills of single females	Single females' wills as % of all wills
1611-20	1641	22	1.3
1621-30	2004	43	2.1
1631-40	1976	57	2.9
1641-50	1401	48	3.4
1661-70	1404	41	2.9
1671-80	1075	33	3.1
Total	9501	244	

Source: M.A. Farrow and T.F. Barton, eds., *Index of Wills proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich 1604-1686*, Norfolk Record Society, 28 (1958).

Confirmation of a rise in the proportion of probate documents belonging to female singles lends considerable support to the argument put forward in Chapter One that the percentage of women who did not marry during the seventeenth century increased. However, *ceteris paribus*, it more accurately represents an increase in the proportion of single women able to make a will; it is therefore indicative of a rise in the number of women, who, in addition to remaining single over the course of the seventeenth century, enjoyed a measure of financial security.

¹³ Since very few documents survive for the decade 1651-60, this decade had been excluded.

¹⁴ I have included all celibate females in this calculation, except that once again the decade 1651-60 has been excluded because of the small number of examples.

Appendix II

The problem with spinsters

As Appendix I suggested, the term “spinster” in the Tudor and Stuart periods was not reserved exclusively for use in descriptions of single women. Both in court records and probate documents there are occasional glimpses of wives and widows, who, in addition to being identified by their marital status, were allocated the description “spinster”. In terms of court records, it is often wives who are described in this manner. Carol Wiener has therefore suggested that this may have been little more than a legal fiction designed by justices in order to sidestep the problem of the uncertainty about the criminal responsibility of married women and the apportionment of blame between wife and husband.¹ Valerie Edwards on the other hand believes it may be more realistically explained in relation to its use as a legal tactic by females charged with a capital offence who were pleading the defence of marital coercion, but whose marital status at the time could not be firmly established.² Yet neither explanation satisfactorily accounts for the occasional use the description in probate material in conjunction with a more concrete marital definition, in this case, most often that of “widow”. Maryon Tasker, for example, was described on her inventory as “Maryon Tasker, widow, of Fillingham in the County of Lincoln, spinster”, and Bridget Edmunds of Bury St Edmunds appeared as “spinster and widow of Francis” on her will.³ Here it seems that the addition of the term “spinster” can most reasonably be imputed to the fact that the testator in question had been involved in the process of spinning. Spinning had from antiquity been a classic symbol of virtuous womanhood, regardless of marital status, and in the medieval period, the coats of arms of both unmarried women and widows were borne on lozenges or fusils, in which the heraldic lozenge originally represented a spindle covered with tow for spinning.⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the use of the term

¹ C.Z. Wiener, “Is a Spinster an Unmarried Woman?”, *American Journal of legal History*, 20 (1976): 31.

² V. Edwards, “The Case of the Married Spinster: An Alternative Explanation”, *American Journal of Legal History*, 21 (1977): 264-5.

³ L.A.O. INV 167/206, 1665, Maryon Tasker; Evans, ed., *Wills* 35, 120.

⁴ J.H. Baker, “Male and Married Spinsters”, *American Journal of Legal History*, 21 (1977): 257. In the Book of Proverbs the definition of a virtuous woman includes a reference to spinning; “She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff”. See Prov. 31.19.

“spinster” (earliest manifestation - 1362) was originally reserved for the definition of “a woman (or rarely a man) who spins”, and thus had no additional marital significance.⁵ Spinning remained the touchstone of female employment throughout the Tudor and Stuart periods, and while neither Maryon Tasker nor Bridget Edmunds appear from their documentation to have had access to spinning implements, it remains possible that both had been employed as itinerant spinners by a number of local employers. Another widowed spinster - Widdow Letting of Barkston in Lincolnshire who, according to her inventory, owned twenty-six sheep and three wheels - can be more directly linked to the business of spinning.⁶

From the opposite perspective, problems also arise as a result of the fact that occasionally the names of a number of women described on their probate documents as spinsters were prefixed by the title of “Mrs.”. Mrs. Joyce Jeffreys of Ham Castle in Worcestershire is relatively well-known in this respect, but two other Lincolnshire examples were uncovered in the course of this investigation, Mrs. Bridget Phillips and Mrs. Jane Farmery.⁷ There is no reason to suspect any of these women were or had been married. Joyce Jeffreys is known to have died unmarried, and though the will of Jane Farmery is not available, that of Bridget Phillips serves to confirm her single status. Moreover, since the title of “Mrs.” features only on Bridget’s inventory and not her will, it seems to have been in the nature of an honorarium, granted, as Chapter Five suggested, as a mark of respect.

However, despite some quirky examples of nomenclature in the seventeenth century, the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that from this period in time the term “spinster” took on a second interpretation “as the proper legal designation of one still unmarried”.⁸ It has been suggested by J.H. Baker that the declining use of the description “single woman”, which had been the definition usually appended to unmarried women in fifteenth century England, may have been related to technicalities arising out of the law of additions during the reign of Henry V, whereby statutory additions to names of defendants were required in original writs, appeals and indictments.⁹ The application of the definition “single woman” failed to fulfil the conditions of the statute since it was neither an estate, nor a degree nor a mystery. But

⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *O.E.D.*) second edition (1989), s.v. “spinster”.

⁶ L.A.O. INV 185/7, 1684, Widow Letting.

⁷ See Griffiths, “Joyce Jefferies”, 1-32; L.A.O. INV 187/15, 1687, Mrs. Bridget Phillips; L.A.O. INV 190/105, 1691, Mrs. Jane Farmery.

⁸ *O.E.D.*, s.v. “spinster”

because the definition “spinster” was undoubtedly a mystery, and so satisfied the legal requirements, the use of the description “single woman” was therefore discouraged, causing the former to grow in popularity during the course of the sixteenth century. Though the term literally translated into one who spun and could be imputed reasonably to any honest woman, the fact that the definitions “wife” and “widow” were considered sufficient additions to the names of married and widowed women respectively meant that the term “spinster” became increasingly associated with the category of women who had never married. By 1617 the lexicographer Minsheu therefore felt confident enough to assert that the term “spinster” was an “addition in our Common law, onely added in Obligations, Evidences and writings, unto maids unmarried, as it were, calling them Spinners”. The same definition can be found in T. Blount’s *Glossographia* of 1656 and T. Manley’s *The Interpreter* of 1672.¹⁰

Certainly by the seventeenth century the use of the term “spinster” does not appear to have enjoyed any specific occupational significance. Agnes Dowdney, for example, was described on her burial record in 1642 as the daughter of John, but on her will, she was defined as a spinster. Yet she had no spinning implements, and there was nothing to suggest she involved herself in spinning activity, at least for remunerative purposes. On the contrary she was in possession of annuities valued at £8 per year, for the term of the life of John (her father) and Matthew Dowdney, which would have provided adequately for her material needs.¹¹ Moreover, examination of the inventories of single women who were designated as spinsters in the Lincolnshire and Cheshire material has revealed that only a small proportion had spinning implements at their disposal (although more could have been employed as spinners by a third party): in Cheshire though more than ninety-six per cent of the testators in every decade except the 1600s were defined as spinsters, only twenty-seven per cent of those (with inventories) had some type of wheel in their possession; in Lincolnshire only thirteen per cent of designated spinsters had at least one wheel listed on their inventory schedules.

Analysis of the changing numbers of probate documents belonging to single females that were appended with the descriptions of either “spinster” or “single woman” shows a marked difference between the adoption of the two definitions in the

⁹ Baker, “Male”, 258.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 257-8.

¹¹ Wyatt, ed., *Uffculme*, 84.

Cheshire and Lincolnshire material. The use of the definition “single woman”, for example, as Table A2.1 below indicates, was never common in Cheshire, where by far the majority of unmarried women throughout the century were identified as spinsters.

Table A2.1: Number of female singles defined as single women and spinsters in Cheshire, 1601-1700.

Decade	Cheshire female singles¹²	Cheshire spinsters	Cheshire single women
1601-10	18	16 (89%)	2
1611-20	35	33 (94%)	1
1621-30	41	40 (98%)	1
1631-40	36	36 (100%)	0
1641-50	32	32 (100%)	0
1651-60	4	4 (100%)	0
1661-70	87	84 (97%)	3
1671-80	80	79 (99%)	1
1681-90	85	81 (95%)	4
1691-1700	67	65 (97%)	2
	485	470	14

In Lincolnshire however, the position, as revealed in Table A2.2, was noticeably different. While eighty-nine per cent of Cheshire women were described as spinsters in the first decade of the seventeenth century, in Lincolnshire the corresponding figure was sixty-one per cent. By the end of the same century, however, usage of the term “spinster” was approaching Cheshire levels: ninety-one percent of all unmarried women in Lincolnshire were referred to as spinsters, as opposed to ninety-seven per cent of all those in Cheshire.

¹² In addition to the 470 spinsters and 14 single women, there was also one servant in the Cheshire sample to make the total 485.

Table A2.2: Number of female singles defined as single women and spinsters in Lincolnshire, 1601-1700.

Decade	Lincoln female singles ¹³	Lincoln spinsters	Lincoln single women
1601-10	18	11 (61%)	7
1611-20	38	25 (66%)	9
1621-30	41	32 (78%)	9
1631-40	43	29 (67%)	12
1641-50	6	3 (50%)	3
1651-60	1	1 (100%)	0
1661-70	44	33 (75%)	9
1671-80	36	28 (78%)	5
1681-90	24	20 (83%)	3
1691-1700	23	21 (91%)	1
	274	203	58

The differential patterns of nomenclature visible in the Cheshire and Lincolnshire evidence are explained most easily by reference to the nature of the probate documents. In the case of Cheshire, for example, the definitions given to single women were extracted from their surviving wills. The making of a will was generally undertaken by a man, unmarried woman or widow over the age of twenty-one, and most were done when he or she sensed they were close to death.¹⁴ It could be drawn up by any number of people with at least some formal education, either within the testator's own community, or from a neighbouring one, but reflected the personal wishes of the individual in question with regard to the disposal of property. Indeed there may have been considerable regional variation in the use of specific terminology, for while celibate females in Cheshire displayed a preference for the title "spinster", those in Norfolk rarely defined themselves as anything other than single women: of 283 women who died unmarried between 1604 and 1686, only 4 were

¹³ In addition to the 203 spinsters and 58 single women, there were also 3 virgins, 1 bachelor, 1 daughter, 2 maid/maidens, and 6 servants in the Lincolnshire sample to make the total 274.

¹⁴ Half the wills made in the Lincolnshire communities of Leverton and Grantham between 1562 and 1600 were made within one week of the testator's death. See Coppel "Willmaking", 37-8.

described on their wills as spinsters.¹⁵ Analysis of the definitions on single female wills surviving in the Sudbury and Suffolk registries during the 1620s and 1630s (outlined in Appendix IV, Table A4.2), also indicates a much higher proportion of females who described themselves as single women.

Probate inventories, on the other hand, from which the information on the Lincolnshire examples was extracted, were drawn up after the death of the testator usually by at least two local men. These men were authorised to appraise the value of the personal property of the deceased for the purposes of proving the will, and were normally given breakfast or supper in return for their services.¹⁶ Thus social identity, in this case a function of the way single women were viewed by the male members of their community, was likely to have figured much more highly in the delineation of status descriptions on probate inventories, while wills would have reflected a more personal point of view. Significantly, the shift towards increased usage of the term “spinster” by appraisers in Lincolnshire is also reflected in two small samples of singles’ probate inventories from the counties of Kent and Cornwall during the seventeenth century.¹⁷ In the case of the Kent inventories, for instance, there is a clear break in the practice of defining unmarried females as single woman from the 1620s: of the forty-three single females in the probate sample, only five were described as single women and all were before 1621, while the twenty-three described as spinsters all appeared in the records after that date.¹⁸ The evidence is not quite so straightforward in Cornwall. Of the sixty-three probate documents belonging to celibate females, ten were appended with the definition “single woman”, one with “young woman” and fifty-two with “spinster”, and unlike the case in Kent, the use of the description “single woman” continues to be employed throughout the century. Nevertheless, the great rise in the number of single females described as spinsters in the later seventeenth century - only thirteen of the fifty-two were defined in this way prior to 1660 - testifies once again to the changing application and meaning of this particular terminology.

¹⁵ M.A. Farrow and T.F. Barton, eds., *Index of Wills proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich 1604-1686*, Norfolk Record Society, 28 (1958).

¹⁶ Erickson, *Women*, 33.

¹⁷ These small samples were generously provided by Professor Mark Overton with the assistance of Dr. Andrew Hann. There are sixty-three examples from Kent (twenty men and forty-three women) and seventy-nine from Cornwall (sixteen men and sixty-two women) between 1601 and 1700.

¹⁸ Of the remaining fifteen, three were described as maids or maidens and twelve as virgins.

The shifting pattern of application with regard to the term “spinster” increases in significance when considered alongside the fact that by the early eighteenth century the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the term “spinster” had gained yet another interpretation, coming as it did to denote “ a woman still unmarried; esp. one beyond the usual age for marriage, an old maid” (first recorded usage 1719).¹⁹ Interestingly, the likelihood of such a metamorphosis occurring towards the end of the seventeenth century is suggested by a consultation of local census material. Three census listings were analysed in detail, Ealing (1599), Chilvers Coton (1684) and Lichfield (1695), all of which are discussed in further detail in Appendix III. Accordingly, it was found that no single women were defined as a spinsters on the Ealing census, only one appeared on the Chilvers Coton listing, but as many as fifty-three of the single women in Lichfield in 1695 were described in this manner. There is no evidence that the use of the term at this point was age related - the women concerned fell into an age range of between thirteen and sixty-six - but the term was used almost exclusively to denote that the woman in question was not bound in authority to a man (i.e., as a daughter, servant or wife). In Chilvers Coton, for example, the spinster in question was an independent woman, in charge of her own household, and though the spinsters in Lichfield had more varied living arrangements, they were still largely outside direct male control: of the six spinsters who were also defined as daughters, only two - Ann and Elizabeth Lloyd, sisters and gentlewomen - were still living with both parents; the remaining four were living with their widowed mothers. Of the other forty-seven, seven were living in their own households, seventeen were living with their brothers, and twenty-three were listed in residences in which there was no visible relationship with the head. Rising concern with the independent single woman, exemplified most clearly in the development in contemporary literature of the description “spinster” as a pejorative term for a single female aimed primarily at eliciting the opposite (i.e., marriage), was therefore in addition a feature of the official documentation of the period.

Concern over high levels of lifelong celibacy, however, were not restricted to discussions of female behaviour, for the higher profile celibacy received during this period also impacted, if less strikingly, on the levels of social concern over bachelorhood. The application of the term “bachelor” did not rise to the same extent

¹⁹ *O.E.D.*, s.v. “spinster”.

as its “spinster” counterpart in the Lincolnshire probate material (or the small samples from Kent and Cornwall), but as Table A2.3 below suggests, levels of usage had noticeably expanded by the end of the seventeenth century.

Table A2.3: Number of male singles defined as single men and bachelors in Lincolnshire 1601-1700.

Decade	Lincoln male singles (all)	Lincoln bachelors	Lincoln single men
1601-10	39	19 (49%)	20
1611-20	56	32 (57%)	18
1621-30	42	22 (52%)	17
1631-40	45	19 (42%)	24
1641-50	10	5 (50%)	4
1651-60	3	3 (100%)	0
1661-70	57	35 (61%)	20
1671-80	60	42 (70%)	14
1681-90	42	32 (76%)	7
1691-1700	25	18 (72%)	6
	379	227	130

In conclusion, there is evidence to suggest that the word “spinster” had three possible meanings during the seventeenth century. While it retained its original medieval definition and was therefore used occasionally to describe a woman engaged in the business of spinning, regardless of her marital status, from the early seventeenth century it had become in addition the correct designation in legal terms for an unmarried woman. At this point it seems likely that the definition “spinster” as Minsheu indicated, was interchangeable with that of “single woman” for the purpose of defining an unmarried female, with the possibility of some regional variation in the adoption of a particular terminology. By the later seventeenth century, however, the term “spinster” may increasingly have been utilised by certain men anxious to identify unmarried women who, in addition to being single, appeared to enjoy a measure of autonomy. The fact that it was utilised predominantly in order to describe of single

women however, means that for the purposes of this study it has been assumed that women defined as spinsters had not been married, unless there was evidence to suggest otherwise.

Appendix III

The use of household listings

In order to provide a broader picture of the experiences of celibates in the seventeenth century, this investigation has also relied heavily on a number of local census listings that survive from the early modern period, the full details of which are available in the bibliography. Although the first national census was not conducted until 1801, a number of listings were created over the course of the early modern period by a range of groups and individuals with a variety of reasons for enumerating their local residents, although most were of military, fiscal or ecclesiastical origin.¹ Problems attending the use of such listings, however, are numerous. The individualised approaches of the compilers combined with the variety of functional uses to which they were to be applied ensures that a large proportion of the household listings do not conform to any uniform structure: sometimes the community is not recorded in its entirety; some lists are little more than a group of names; others list inhabitants by household, rank and occupation. In addition, the chronological spread of the listings is very uneven. Only four complete listings pre-date the Civil War period, with the majority of those remaining being concentrated around the decade between 1695 and 1705, when the Marriage Duty Act was in force.² Furthermore, the vagaries of survival ensured that the extant sample is in no way random. The communities for which listings survive had a wide geographical spread, were of varying sizes, and ranged from the agricultural through to the proto-industrial and the urban. Direct comparisons are therefore impossible, and generalisation difficult.

Local census listings were employed in this context primarily to provide a snapshot of single people within their own community at a given point in time. Once again, however, identification can be problematic. Documents were commonly idiosyncratic in design and purpose, and did not routinely offer details on marital status, although this can often be deduced from the layout of the particular census: despite their eccentricities, many were organised around the concept of the household,

¹ A full list of surviving local census listings is available from the Federation of Family History Societies. See J.Gibson and M. Medlycott, *Local Census Listings 1522-1930 Holdings in the British Isles*, second edition (1994).

² T. Arkell, "Multiplying factors for estimating population totals from the Hearth Tax", *Local Population Studies*, 28 (1982): 53.

listing first the husband, followed by his wife, children, servants or apprentices, and finally any lodgers or visitors. Nevertheless, while single women remain relatively easy to identify, once again single men prove more elusive. Bachelors were identified on later censuses occasioned by the Marriage Duty Act, but earlier listings tended to restrict any descriptive information to that of an occupational nature.

Other problems arise as a result of the fact that only a handful of surviving enumerations consistently list details of individuals' ages. Awareness of numerical age - which had been far from universal in the Tudor period - came to form an increasingly significant part of the early modern psyche during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it still remained at some distance from its modern equivalent.³ Those interested in establishing their correct age would then make suitable investigations. A Wiltshire girl, not yet sixteen, visited her local vicar at Broad Hinton "to know her age with a view to getting married", while the Verney family searched the parish registers in order to establish the age of Elizabeth Palmer, before marriage arrangements between her and John Verney could be pursued in earnest.⁴ As a result a number of ages entered on the census listings were approximate, and it is not uncommon, for example, to find a young female servant described as "20 odd", or other individuals as "50 odd" or "60 odd". Some entries, however, stretch levels of credibility to a maximum: on the Ealing census of 1599 Elizabeth Sherborne, aged sixty, is stated to have a daughter aged four; on the Lichfield census of 1695 Ralph Dodd, twenty-nine, and wife Katharine, forty, were listed as having three daughters, Elizabeth, eighteen, Alice, fourteen, and Mary, two, all of whom were described as their own.⁵

Though a large number of local listings were consulted in the course of the project, the enumerations of Ealing in Middlesex in 1599, Chilvers Coton in Warwickshire in 1684 and Lichfield in Staffordshire in 1695 were singled out for detailed analysis - of all the census listings that survive for the early modern period, only these three consistently list age and marital status and fall within the chronology of the study. Nevertheless, the communities were very different in nature. Ealing in 1599 contained 86 separate households (though not necessarily individual families) and was primarily agricultural, although its proximity to London ensured it was not

³ Thomas, "Age", 205.

⁴ Ingram, *Church Courts*, 130; Whyman, *Sociability*, 118.

⁵ Allison, *Ealing*, 16; Lichfield, 1695, 5.

characteristically a traditional rural settlement: it contained a boarding school for young gentlemen and a number of infants and young children who had been put out to nurse. Chilvers Coton in 1684, on the other hand, was almost twice as large, having around 176 households, and exhibited more proto-industrial-type characteristics, in the form of small workshop based craftsmen.⁶ Finally Lichfield was a relatively large urban settlement with 623 separate households.⁷ In addition the documents were initiated with widely differing purposes in mind. That of Ealing appears to have been created as part of a wider survey of the hundred of Ossulstone (in which the parish lay), and seems to have been designed to deliver information of use in the administration and enforcement of Tudor social legislation.⁸ That of Chilvers Coton was created as part of an extensive survey of the manor of Chilvers Coton, most probably instigated by the then owners of the Arbury estate, the Newdigate family, in which the manor itself lay.⁹ The Lichfield census, however (believed to have been compiled by Gregory King), was created as a direct result of the Marriage Duty Act of 1695, and therefore required a list of the inhabitants of every parish, along with their age and marital status.¹⁰ Despite their different origins, however, each is capable of providing a unique insight into the experience of celibates during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and together, the three listings provide an opportunity to draw guarded comparisons about residential arrangements and the social position of singles over the course of the period in question.

⁶ R. Wall, "Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England", *Continuity and Change*, 2 (1987): 83.

⁷ See Allison, *Ealing*; Chilvers Coton, 1684; Lichfield, 1695.

⁸ Allison, *Ealing*, 7-12.

⁹ This information was kindly provided by the Warwickshire Record office.

¹⁰ D.V. Glass, "Two Papers on Gregory King", in Glass and Eversley, eds., *Population*, 167-8.

Appendix IV

Sundry tables

Table A4.1: Details of status appended to the single men's probate documents consulted in the course of the project.

Given Status	Lincs. invs. 1601-1700	Lincs. wills 1630-33	Sud. wills 1630-38	Suff. wills 1620-26
None given		10	13	53
Apothecary			1	
Apprentice	1	1		
Alesman				1
Bachelor	224 (59%)	9 (9%)	1 (1%)	
Bachelor, Late Servant	1			
Bachelor & Tailor	1			
Bachelor & Victualler	1			
Baker		2		
Beer brewer				1
Bricklayer				1
Butcher		1		1
Carpenter		1	1	1
Chandler			1	
Chapman				1
Clerk		1	1	
Clothier			1	
Clothworker				1
Cooper				1
Cordwainer		1		1
Fisherman				1
Gent (incl. 1 Esquire)		7	3	3

Given Status	Lincs. invs. 1601-1700	Lincs. wills 1630-33	Sud. wills 1630-38	Suff. wills 1620-26
Glazier				1
Glover		1		1
Grocer			1	1
Hospital governor			1	
Husbandman		15	13	7
Joiner			1	
Labourer		7		2
Manservant	1			
Mercer		2	1	
Merchant				1
Miller				1
Musician		1		
Physician			1	
Piper		1		
Ploughwright				1
Porter		1		
Sailor				1
Servant	18		1	
Shoemaker		1	1	
Single, cooper				1
Single/Single Man	130 (34%)	12 (12%)	36 (32%)	8 (6%)
Tailor		3	3	2
Tanner		2		
Thatcher				1
Vintner				1
Weaver		1	2	6
Yeoman		16	30	26
Young Man	2	1		

Given Status	Lincs. invs. 1601-1700	Lincs. wills 1630-33	Sud. wills 1630-38	Suff. wills 1620-26
Young Man, shoemaker		1		
Totals	379	98	113	127

Source: L.A.O. LCC 1630-33.

L.A.O. INV 1601-1700.

N. Evans, ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1630-35*, Suffolk Record Society, 29 (1987).

- ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1636-38*, Suffolk Record Society, 35 (1993).

M.E. Allen, ed., *Wills of the Archdeacon of Suffolk 1620-24*, Suffolk Record Society, 31 (1989).

- ed., *Wills of the Archdeacon of Suffolk 1625-26*, Suffolk Record Society, 37 (1995).

Table A4.2: Details of status appended to the single women's probate documents consulted in the course of the project.

Given Status	Lincs. invs. 1601- 1700	Lincs. wills 1630-33	Cheshire wills + invs 1601- 1700	Sudbury wills 1630-38	Suffolk wills 1620-26
None given		9		6	21
Bachelor (!)	1				
Daughter	1	2		1	
Maid	1				
Maiden	1				
Maidservant	3				
Servant	3		1		
Single/Single Woman	56 (20%)	3 (11%)	14 (3%)	31 (60%)	15 (38%)
Single Woman, Servant	1				
Spinster	203 (74%)	14 (50%)	469 (97%)	14 (27%)	4 (10%)
Spinster, Button maker			1		
Spinster, Single Woman	1				
Virgin	3				
Totals	274	28	485	52	40

Source: L.A.O. LCC 1630-33.

L.A.O. INV 1601-1700.

C.R.O. WC, WI, WS, EDA, 1601-1700.

N. Evans, ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1630-35*, Suffolk Record Society, 29 (1987).

- ed., *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1636-38*, Suffolk Record Society, 35 (1993).

M.E. Allen, ed., *Wills of the Archdeacon of Suffolk 1620-24*, Suffolk Record Society, 31 (1989).

- ed., *Wills of the Archdeacon of Suffolk 1625-26*, Suffolk Record Society, 37 (1995).

Table A4.3: Details of the occupations of some Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles as revealed in probate inventories, 1601-1700.

Occupation from inventory	Lincolnshire Men 1601-1700 (n = 379)	Lincolnshire Women 1601-1700 (n = 274)	Cheshire Women 1601-1700 (n = 384)
Alehouse/Inn keeper	1	1	2
Barber			1
Blacksmith	1		
Boat	2		
Brewer	3		1
Button maker			1
Carder			10
Carpenter	1		
Coffeehouse keeper			1
Haberdasher			1
Launderer (iron)		2	16
Launderer (wash tub)		1	1
Lender (formal)	129	93	204
Joiner	1		
Mercer/Grocer			1
Milliner			1
Seamstress		1	2
Shopkeeper		1	3
Spinner (wheel/s)	9	37	105
Tailor	2		
Victualler	1		
Weaver	3		2
Wright		1	

Table A4.4: Relative status and proportions of single women over twenty-five years of age in Ealing (1599), Chilvers Coton (1684) and Lichfield (1695).

Relationship to head of household	Ealing	Chilvers Coton	Lichfield
Daughter	2 (18%)	7 (50%)	47 (39%)
Servant	8 (73%)	5 (36%)	39 (33%)
Sister/Sister-in-law	1 (9%)	1 (7%)	11 (9%)
Unknown		1 (7%)	18 (15%)
Head			5 (4%)
Single women over 25	11	14	120
All women over 25	80	163	728
Proportion of women over 25 who were single	14%	9%	16%

Source: See Table A4.5 below.

Table A4.5: Relative status and proportions of single men over twenty-seven years of age in Ealing (1599), Chilvers Coton (1684) and Lichfield (1695).

Relationship to head of household	Ealing	Chilvers Coton	Lichfield
Son	1 (4%)	5 (24%)	11 (23%)
Servant	6 (26%)	4 (19%)	2 (4%)
Brother		2 (9%)	4 (8%)
Employee	7 (31%)	5 (24%)	
Unknown	8 (35%)	1 (5%)	20 (42%)
Head	1 (4%)	4 (19%)	11 (23%)
Single men over 27	23	21	48
All men over 27	88	153	525
Proportion of men over 27 who were single	26%	14%	9%

Source: K.J. Allison, *An Elizabethan "Census" of Ealing*, Ealing Local History Society Members Papers, 2 (1962).

Local census listing for Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire, 1684.

Local census listing for Lichfield, Staffordshire, 1695.

Table A4.6: Crude average birth and death rates per decade (per 1, 000 population) 1600-1699.

Decade	Crude birth rate	Crude death rate
1600-09	33.56	23.76
1610-19	32.22	25.97
1620-29	31.98	25.89
1630-39	31.36	26.07
1640-49	31.29	25.92
1650-59	27.63	27.05
1660-69	29.12	29.13
1671-79	29.39	28.65
1680-89	31.93	32.67
1690-99	31.42	28.51

Source: E.A. Wrigley R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871*, (Cambridge, 1981; paperback edition with new introduction, Cambridge, 1989), Table A3.3, 532.

Table A4.7: Place of residence of Lincolnshire and Cheshire singles, as revealed in probate documents, 1601-1700.

Group	Total number	Rural number (%)	Urban number (%)
Cheshire Women	484	367 (76%)	117 (24%)
Lincolnshire Women	266	204 (77%)	62 (23%)
Lincolnshire Men	374	328 (88%)	46 (12%)

Source: J. Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume IV 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967), 466-475. Place of residence was designated urban if it was listed as a market town.

Table A4.8: Number of Lincolnshire and Cheshire single women with access to land and capital as indicated in probate inventories, 1601-1700.

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lincolnshire	274	154	3 (1%)	16	41	66 (24%)
Cheshire	384	303	21 (5%)	28	20	54 (14%)

Key:-

- 1: Number of inventories.
- 2: Number evidencing money-lending.
- 3: Number evidencing money-lending and landholding.
- 4: Number evidencing landholding.
- 5: Number suggesting cottage holding or trade.
- 6: Number indicating no visible means of support, i.e., no land, livestock, capital, craft or trade.

Appendix V

Cheshire sample

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
EDA2/3	JANE	DONE	UTKINTON
EDA2/3	FRANCIS	BUCKLEY	CHEADLE
WC 1601	ALICE	ROWBOTHAM	OFFERTON
WC 1609	KATHERINE	VERNON	TARVIN
WC 1614	MARGARET	JONES	STALILANDS
WC 1614	ALICE	HILL	MOBBERLEY
WC 1614	JANE	HODGKINSON	MACCLESFIELD
WC 1618	MARGERIE	NEWBOLT	LARTON
WC 1619	ELIZABETH	RICE	GREAT SAUGHALL
WC 1624	MAUD	MOORES	TILSTON
WC 1625	ELLEN	BURGESS	STOCKPORT
WC 1625	KATHERINE	TAYLOR	MOTTRAM ST ANDREW
WC 1634	ELLEN	BRADSHAW	HANDLEY
WC 1637	JANE	BRERETON	OLDCASTLE
WC 1648	DOROTHY	WARD	ADLINGTON
WC 1661	ANN	DICKON	MOBBERLEY
WC 1664	MARGARET	MILLINGTON	ASTON
WC 1666	ALICE	FRITH	AUDLEM
WC 1667	ELIZABETH	SUTTON	NANTWICH
WC 1670	ELIZABETH	ANTROBUS	BOLLINGTON
WC 1684	REBECCA	EGERTON	CHESTER
WC 1685	ELIZABETH	HOLT	SANDBACH
WC 1690	SARAH	WALKER	SUTTON
WC 1690	ELIZABETH	BRUNDRETT	SUTTON IN PRESTBURY
WC 1692	MARY	WIDDENS	CHESTER
WI 1604	ELIZABETH	COOKE	NEWHALL
WI 1609	ELIZABETH	BAILEY	BAGULEY
WI 1610	KATHERINE	HEGINBOTHAM	DISLEY
WI 1610	ELIZABETH	MELLOR	TORKINGTON
WI 1610	ANNE	FOGGE	OFFERTON
WI 1613	ALICE	WHARMBY	POYNTON
WI 1613	JANE	WARD	WILMSLOW
WI 1613	MARGARET	TAYLOR	BUTLEY
WI 1613	MARGERIE	JACKSON	RAINOW
WI 1613	MARGERIE	STUBBS	CRANAGE
WI 1613	ANN	WYLDE	TAXAL
WI 1613	ANN	SHAWCROSS	ETCHELLS
WI 1616	MARY	HOLLINWORTH	MATLEY
WI 1616	ELIZABETH	BROMESDIE	WITTON
WI 1616	MARGARET	OWENS	ASTON BUDWORTH
WI 1616	SIBELL	FORREST	ASTON
WI 1616	ELIZABETH	JACKSON	HATTERSLEY

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WI 1616	ELLEN	CHESHIRE	MOORE
WI 1616	FRANCES	BURGE	DENMORE
WI 1619	ALICE	MARCHINGTON	GODLEY, MOTTRAM
WI 1627	CATHERINE	BERCHENED	COMBERBACH
WI 1627	JENET	COMBERBACH	BOLLINGTON
WI 1627	ELIZABETH	TIPPING	HALE
WI 1627	ELLEN	WATS	APPLETON
WI 1628	MARGARET	WARBURTON	ASTON
WI 1630	JANE	OWLEY	AGDEN
WI 1630	ELLEN	SPROSON	NEWHALL AUDLEM
WI 1630	ELIZABETH	WHILLOCK	WESTON
WI 1630	ELLEN	BANNION	THORNTON ON LE MOORS
WI 1630	ELIZABETH	WETTENHALL	BICKERTON
WI 1637	ELLEN	JOHNSON	WOODCHURCH
WI 1637	ELLEN	MOORE ALS KENT	SANDBACH
WI 1641	MARY	PEARSON	WRYNEHILL
WI 1660	EMMA	LOWNES	CARRINSHAM
WI 1661	LETTICE	COE	TATTON
WI 1661	MARGARET	HUILT	OLLERTON
WI 1663	MARGARET	HANCOCK	TRANMERE
WI 1663	HANNAH	GLEGG	CALDY GRANGE
WI 1663	ELIZABETH	BETTELEY	BADDILEY
WI 1664	EMMA	BAGULEY	-
WI 1664	ELLEN	DOBER	NEWTON
WI 1664	MARGARET	JONES	CHEADLE
WI 1665	KATHERINE	LEY	OVERTON
WI 1665	ANNE	PEERS	CHESTER
WI 1665	ANNE	YOUNG	TRANMERE
WI 1666	MARY	WARRINGTON	NANTWICH
WI 1666	ANNE	WALTON	ASHLEY
WI 1666	KATHERINE	EDWARDS	NEWHALL
WI 1667	ANNE	STREET ALS STRETTELL	NETHER KNUTSFORD
WI 1668	JOAN	TORKINGTON	WERNETH
WI 1668	ANN	UNWAIN	POTT SHRIGLEY
WI 1668	MARY	RIDGWAY	MACCLESFIELD
WI 1668	ALICE	KENERDALE	OVER TABLEY
WI 1668	ANN	WALLEY	KINDERTON
WI 1668	REBECCA	SILCOCKE	CHOLMONDESTON
WI 1676	JANE	SHROWBRIDGE	LOSTOCK GRAHAM
WI 1687	ELIZABETH	HENSHAW	BUDWORTH
WI 1687	ELLEN	THOMAS	MANLEY
WI 1687	MARY	TIMPERLEY	HALE
WI 1687	JANE	BURGES	MACCLESFIELD
WI 1687	MARY	HUNT	ALTRICHAM
WI 1687	ELLEN	SPARKE	ASTON GRANGE
WI 1687	ANN	DEANE	NANTWICH

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WI 1687	ELEANOR	WESTON	SANDIWAY
WI 1687	JOAN	ROBINSON	WALLASLEY
WI 1689	MARY	GRAVENER	SWELTENHAM
WI 1690	MARY	WILLIAMSON	GATLEY
WI 1690	MARY	SWAINE	SOMERFORD RADNER
WI 1690	CATHERINE	LEAH	MACCLESFIELD
WI 1691	HANNAH	ACTON	LEFTWICH
WI 1691	ANNE	EVANS	CHESTER
WI 1691	MARGARET	ASHTON ALS WALES	ASHTON ON MERSEY
WI 1692	ANN	BOWER	PRESTBURY
WI 1692	SARAH	LOWNDS	LOWER WITHINGTON
WI 1692	SARAH	JACKSON	TOFT
WI 1693	SARAH	GALLAMORE	CHESTER
WI 1693	MARY	SWINTON	ANTROBUS
WI 1693	ELIZABETH	HOWLEY	MACCLESFIELD
WI 1693	MARY	HODGSON	LOWER BEBINGTON
WI 1693	MARY	HILL	MACCLESFIELD
WI 1694	MARGARET	STUBBS	ALLOSTOCK
WI 1694	ELLEN	NEILD	CHEADLE HULME
WI 1694	MARGARET	SMITH	RABY
WI 1695	ELIZABETH	KENNERLEY	SWETTENHAM
WI 1695	ANNE	CHELL	CONGLETON
WI 1695	ELIZABETH	JOHNSON	MARTON
WI 1695	ANN	WILCOXSON	OVER
WS 1603	ELLEN	STRETTEL	MOBBERLEY
WS 1603	MARGERY	SWENE	GAWSWORTH
WS 1603	ISOBELLA	BRERTON	ALSAGER
WS 1604	ELLINORE	JACKSON	KNUTSFORD
WS 1605	MARY	JEPSON	CAPESTHORNE
WS 1608	ELIZABETH	WALKER	SANDIWAY
WS 1608	KATHERINE	BARROW	NESS
WS 1609	JANE	BROOME	WITTON
WS 1610	ALICE	MIDDLEHURST	GRAPPENHALL
WS 1610	ANN	HELD	MOBBERLEY
WS 1610	ELLEN	PERCIVAL	PICKMERE
WS 1610	MARGARET	MARSHLAND	BOSDEN
WS 1611	ALICE	HANDLEY	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1611	JOANE	ORME	OVER ALDERLEY
WS 1611	ELLEN	FLETCHER	NEWHALL
WS 1612	MARGARET	BRUEN	CAPENHURST
WS 1613	ANN	HARDWARE	CHESTER
WS 1614	JANE	ELLIS	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1615	DOROTHY	CHANTLER	OVER ALDERLEY
WS 1616	EMMA	LOWNES	NORTH RODE
WS 1616	ELIZABETH	GREGORY	BEESTON
WS 1616	BRIDGETT	BAILIE	GAWSWORTH

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1617	ALICE	ALDERSLEY	WALLERSCOTE
WS 1617	MARGARET	BENNETSON	BREDBURY
WS 1618	JANE	MIDDLETON	KECKWICK
WS 1620	JANE	HARVEY	LITTLE SUTTON
WS 1620	FRANCES	DOWNES	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1622	ALICE	BRADSHAW	WEAVERSHAM
WS 1622	DOROTHY	CALVELEY	THE LEA
WS 1622	MARGARET	BAYLIE	CONGLETON
WS 1622	ANN	SHAW	SANDBACH
WS 1622	ELIZABETH	DAVENPORT	KINDERTON
WS 1622	KATHERINE	MATTHEW	CHESTER
WS 1622	KATHERINE	FURNIVALL	BETCHTON
WS 1623	FRANCES	HALL	CHESTER
WS 1623	KATHERINE	RADLEY	ACTON GRANGE
WS 1623	MARGARET	ROBINSON	BEBINGTON
WS 1624	ISABELLA	COTTON	BOLLINGTON
WS 1624	ALICE	MASSEY	ASTON
WS 1624	MARGARET	BIRKENHEAD	HUXLEY
WS 1625	CHRISTIAN	LEIGH	HUXLEY
WS 1625	ANN	GANDIE	GAWSWORTH
WS 1625	ALICE	CHARLETON	ALTRINCHAM
WS 1626	JANE	MIDDLEHURST	NORTON
WS 1627	ALICE	MEACOCK	CHESTER
WS 1627	ANN	HUELT	WITTON
WS 1628	MARGARET	WITHNELL	ROPE
WS 1628	ELIZABETH	WARBURTON	AGDEN
WS 1629	CHRISTINE	WHITMORE	LEIGHTON
WS 1629	ELLEN	LINGARD	LOWER WITHINGTON
WS 1629	JANE	WALTHALL	WYCHE HALBANK
WS 1630	MARGARET	WRIGHT	ELTON
WS 1630	FRANCES	JODRELL	STOCKPORT
WS 1630	ANN	SHALCROSS	CHEADLE
WS 1630	ELIZABETH	WARD	NETHER ALDERLEY
WS 1631	ALICE	LLOYD	CHESTER
WS 1632	MARGARET	HALL	OVER WHITLEY
WS 1632	ALICE	HEAWOOD	HOLLIN
WS 1632	ALICE	BIRKENHEAD	NANTWICH
WS 1632	ELLEN	HIGGINBOTHAM	MARPLE
WS 1632	MARGARET	GRAY	WRENBURY
WS 1632	JANE	WHITBY	NETHERTON
WS 1633	ELLEN	JANNION	NORLEY
WS 1633	FRANCES	WARREN	POYNTON
WS 1633	JOAN	WARBURTON	CARRINGTON
WS 1633	ELLEN	TURNER	BRERTON
WS 1633	JANE	DENTITH	FRODSHAM
WS 1633	ELIZABETH	STRETTELL	MANTHALL

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1634	MARGARET	GERRARD	CREWOOD, FRODSHAM
WS 1634	ANN	PARKER	MOBBERLEY
WS 1634	KATHERINE	PRICE	CHESTER
WS 1634	ANNE	WRIGHT	NANTWICH
WS 1635	ANN	TRAVIS	SHAVINGTON
WS 1635	ELLEN	DAVENPORT	OLDFIELD
WS 1635	ALICE	POYNTON	CONGLETON
WS 1636	MARGARET	FLINT	CHESTER
WS 1637	FRANCES	BATHOE	BICKERTON
WS 1637	ELLEN	HALLIWELL	CHESTER
WS 1637	ALICE	SMITH	MORETON CUM ALCOMLOW
WS 1637	MARY	HENSHAW	DRAKELOW
WS 1638	MARY	BARTLETT	RIDLEY
WS 1638	MARY	ASTLE	GOLBORNE BELLOW
WS 1639	ANN	HARRISON	MARTON
WS 1639	ELLEN	HANKIN	THINGWALL
WS 1640	SARAH	EDDOWE	EDGE
WS 1640	ANN	HOUGH	WITHINGTON
WS 1640	CECILIA	SOMERFIELD	SANDBACH
WS 1643	ELIZABETH	LEA	SANDBACH
WS 1644	KATHERINE	COTGREAVE	GREENTOWN
WS 1645	ROSE	GIDNEY	SUTTON IN MACCLESFIELD
WS 1646	EMMA	GRIFFITH	PECHFORTON
WS 1646	ELIZABETH	STUBBS	GAWSWORTH
WS 1646	MARGARET	CLIFFE	WYCH MALBANK
WS 1646	ELEANOR	BIRKENHEAD	CHESTER
WS 1646	ELIZABETH	LANCASTER	WISTASTON
WS 1646	MARGARET	CROWTHER	CHESTER
WS 1647	DOROTHY	COTTON	CAMBERMERE
WS 1647	JANE	TURNER	BETCHTON
WS 1647	MARGARET	DALE	BRAMHALL
WS 1647	SIBIL	JOHNSON	HALE
WS 1647	ELIZABETH	NODEN	CREWE
WS 1647	ELLEN	ROWLINSON	CREWE
WS 1647	MAUDE	CAWLEY	KELSALL
WS 1648	ANN	ECCLESTON	CHESTER
WS 1648	JANE	MAINWARING	CALVELEY
WS 1648	MARGARET	PERCIVAL	PARTINGTON
WS 1649	MARGARET	DEANE	NEWBOLD
WS 1649	ANN	CARTWRIGHT	ASTON
WS 1649	ALICE	MINSHULL	CLUTTON
WS 1649	ELLEN	STANLEY	STORETON
WS 1649	ELIZABETH	LEIGH	MERTON
WS 1649	AMY	KEY	HARGRAVE
WS 1649	MARGARET	BEBINGTON	STOKE
WS 1649	JANE	WILKINSON	CONGLETON

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1649	ALICE	DEANE	SMALLWOOD
WS 1649	ALICE	BUCKLEY	WRENBURY
WS 1650	ELLEN	GREGG	UPTON
WS 1660	MARY	JACKSON	CHURCH HULME
WS 1660	JANE	PICKSTOCK	HASLINGTON
WS 1661	ANNE	EDWARDS	CHESTER
WS 1661	ANN	ACKERSLEY	LITTLETON
WS 1661	DOROTHY	HOLCROFT	NANTWICH
WS 1661	MARGARET	LEICESTER	CHESTER
WS 1661	ESTER	PARR	DOWNHAM
WS 1661-4	SARAH	BRUEN	CHESTER
WS 1662	MARGARET	SMITH	CLANTERBROOK
WS 1662	CATHERINE	HASSALL	SANDBACH
WS 1662	ELIZABETH	JACKSON	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1662	CATHERINE	CHETHAM	STOCKPORT
WS 1662	ELLEN	SANDS	KINDERTON
WS 1663	ANN	FRENCH	BURLAND
WS 1663	ANN	MINSHULL	MIDDLEWICH
WS 1663	CATHERINE	BURTON	WAYHOUSE GREEN
WS 1663	ALICE	HALTON	BRADLEY PAR MALPAS
WS 1663	ISABEL	TOMLINSON	WAVERTON
WS 1663	JANE	CUDWORTH	NEWHALL
WS 1664	KATHERINE	ANTROBUS	MONKS HEATH
WS 1664	MARGARET	SHARSHAW	HUNTINGTON
WS 1665	JANE	WILSHAW	WHALLEY
WS 1665	ELIZABETH	DUCKWORTH	DODLESTON
WS 1665	CHRISTINE	RICHARDSON	STOCKPORT
WS 1665	ANN	WALMESLEY	STOCKPORT
WS 1665	MARGARET	CHANTLER	CHURCH LAWTON
WS 1666	ELIZABETH	WITTER	PLUMLEY
WS 1666	MARGERY	WILKINSON	ODD RODE
WS 1666	MARY	SLACK	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1666	MARY	LAWTON	BETCHTON
WS 1666	JANE	BALL	CHURCH COPPENHALL
WS 1666	MARGARET	BIRKENHEAD	CHESTER
WS 1666	JANE	FEANALL	CHESTER
WS 1666	ALICE	PERRY	ALTRINCHAM
WS 1667	MARY	CLOWES	WINCLE
WS 1667	ANN	BASNETT	WHEELLOCK
WS 1667	ELIZABETH	YEARSLEY	HARTFORD
WS 1667	SARAH	BARKER	NEWTON
WS 1667	ELIZABETH	HINTON	RUSHTON
WS 1667	HELLIN	DOBB	POULTON LANCELYN
WS 1667	ISABELLA	CALDWELL	ASTON
WS 1667	JANE	SMITH	MORLEY
WS 1667	ELLEN	NIELD	DUNHAM WOODHOUSES

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1667	ELIZABETH	HAMNETT	HANDLEY
WS 1667	ALICE	ASTBURY	ASHLEY
WS 1668	URSULA	HATTON	KINSLEY
WS 1668	LETTICE	KEMP	SAUGHALL MASSIE
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	RYLE	NORTHEDED
WS 1669	MARGARET	DEAN	STOCKPORT
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	BROSTER	BOSLEY
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	GOFFE ALS GOUGH	CHESTER
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	GALLIMORE	BETCHTON
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	SMITH	CROSSACRES
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	CUNLIFFE	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1669	MARY	MEE	CHURCH HULME
WS 1669	ELIZABETH	WILD	DISLEY
WS 1669	FRANCES	HEWSON	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1670	ELIZABETH	BOWER	SADLOW
WS 1670	MARY	BENNETT	CLOTTON
WS 1670	ANN	SMITH	DUNHAM MASSEY
WS 1670	ELIZABETH	READ	TARVIN
WS 1670	ANN	RIDGWAY	KNUTSFORD
WS 1671	MARY	CROSBY	SHAVINGTON
WS 1671	ELIZABETH	PRICKETT	CHESTER
WS 1671	ELIZABETH	FINLOW	WERVIN
WS 1671	CATHERINE	HOOPER ALS RENCH	SUTTON
WS 1671	ALICE	HICKSON	GREAT NESTON
WS 1671	JANE	PEARSON	WRINEHALL
WS 1671	SARAH	WORTHINGTON	ETCHELLS
WS 1671	MARY	WICH	NETHER ALDERLEY
WS 1671	JANE	ORFORD	TIVERTON
WS 1671	ELLEN	SMITH	TARVIN
WS 1671	ELIZABETH	MASSEY	APPLETON
WS 1672	MARGARET	WHARMBY	BREDBURY
WS 1672	ELIZABETH	BARROW	APPLETON
WS 1672	REBECCA	ROWE	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1672	SUSANNAH	TOWERS	GREAT BARROW
WS 1672	CATHERINE	BARKER	BANKHOUSE
WS 1673	MARY	WELD	LITTLE HASSALL
WS 1673	MARY	BROADHURST	CARRINGHAM IN SWELTENHAM
WS 1673	JULIAN	HINDLEY	THORNCLIFF
WS 1673	ELIZABETH	HULME	SWETTENHAM
WS 1673	MARGERY	WORRALL	TATTENHALL
WS 1673	ELLEN	TURNER ALS WAINWRIGHT	DISLEY
WS 1673	JOAN	OAKES	?
WS 1674	ELLEN	BENESON	BREDBURY
WS 1674	MARGARET	STRETTELL	MOBBERLEY
WS 1674	REBECCA	DALBY	GREAT NESTON
WS 1674	HESTER	MILLER	MACCLESFIELD

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1674	MARY	FLETCHER	MORLEY
WS 1674	MARGARET	GODDART	MOTTRAM IN LONGENDALE
WS 1674	ANNE	LLOYD	MARBURY
WS 1674	JOAN	WALKER	TOFT
WS 1674	MARGERY	ROGERS	BRIDGEMORE
WS 1674	ANN	COOPER	MOTTRAM ANDREW
WS 1674	MARGARET	CLIFFE	SUTTON
WS 1674	MARY	CHORLEY	BASLEY
WS 1674	MARY	BLAGGE	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1674	ALICE	WARBURTON	WARBURTON
WS 1674	DOROTHY	GOODWIN	MATLEY
WS 1674	JOAN	HARPER	ACTON GRANGE
WS 1675	ABIGAIL	BIRCHALL	NORTON
WS 1675	ANN	EVANS	CHESTER
WS 1675	ALICE	WOODE	HANLEY
WS 1675	JANE	LINEALL	MARBURY
WS 1675	ELIZABETH	MOSTON	BURLAND
WS 1675	CATHERINE	RAVENS CROFT	CHESTER
WS 1675	ELLEN	ANTROBUS	SUDLOW
WS 1675	MARGERY	PEDLSY	NETHER ALDERLEY
WS 1675	MARGERY	MAISTERSON	NANTWICH
WS 1675	MARGERY	HIDE	CHESTER
WS 1675	CATHERINE	HOUGH	RAINOW
WS 1676	MARY	ARDERNE	SUTTON
WS 1676	MARY	NIELD	DUNHAM MASSEY
WS 1676	ELLEN	WRIGHT	CHESTER
WS 1676	ELLEN	TURNER	NEWTON
WS 1676	ELIZABETH	ROBINSON	CHESTER
WS 1676	DOROTHY	BLACKAMORE	ACTON
WS 1677	JANE	ANDERTON	GREAT BUDWORTH
WS 1677	ALICE	DALE	FALLIBROOME
WS 1677	ELIZABETH	HAYES	LYMM
WS 1677	EVE	MOTTERSHEAD	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1677	MARY	PARTINGTON	STOCKPORT
WS 1677	ANN	HIGNETT	BURLAND
WS 1678	ELIZABETH	HILL	POULTON CUM SEACOMBE
WS 1678	ELLEN	GEGGE	CHESTER
WS 1678	MARTHA	WINTELEY	MONKS COPPENHALL
WS 1679	MARTHA	BARKER	SANDIWAY
WS 1679	CICELY	LYON	NORTON
WS 1679	JANE	FLEMING	CHESTER
WS 1680	MARY	RADFORD	CHESTER
WS 1680	ANN	CLARKE	ADLINGTON
WS 1680	ALICE	MEACOCK	GULDEN SUTTON
WS 1680	ELIZABETH	CHESTER	NEWAHH
WS 1680	ELIZABETH	COOPER	SOUND

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1680	MARTHA	EGERTON	CHESTER
WS 1680	MARGARET	BAXTER	GATLEY
WS 1680	ELIZABETH	WALL	CHURCH MINSHALL
WS 1680	MARY	FEARNLEY	ANTROBUS
WS 1680	REBECCA	OLDFIELD	GAWSWORTH
WS 1681	MARGERY	CHILD	ADLINGTON
WS 1681	MARGARET	JACKSON	ALLOSTOCK
WS 1681	MARGARET	BLACKSHAW	MOBBERLEY
WS 1681	MARGARET	BANNER	NORLEY
WS 1681	MARY	HUNT	ALTRINCHAM
WS 1681	MARY	BENNETT	ELTON
WS 1681	MARY	AMSON	LOWER WITHRINGTON
WS 1681	ELIZABETH	PICKFORD	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1681	JANE	HEWITT	HANKILOW
WS 1681	ELIZABETH	BARKER	OVER MARTON
WS 1681	ELLEN	THOMASON	TARPOLEY
WS 1681	SARAH	MASSIE	GREAT BUDWORTH
WS 1682	MARGRET	ADAMS	GREAT SUTTON
WS 1682	BRIDGET	BROOK	GOOSTRY
WS 1682	MARTHA	CHURCH	NANTWICH
WS 1682	ELIZABETH	WILSON	MINSHALL VERNON
WS 1682	MARY	HOWLEY	DUKINFIELD
WS 1682	ELIZABETH	KELSALL	HARTFORD
WS 1682	MARY	WILLIAMSON	STOCKPORT
WS 1682	MARY	WARBURTON	WARBURTON
WS 1682	ELIZABETH	CALVELEY	CHESTER
WS 1683	ANN	BURTON	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1683	MARGERY	BURGES	NEWBOLD ASTBURY
WS 1683	MARY	HORDERN	BETCHTON
WS 1683	REBECCA	LOWNDS	NORTH RODE
WS 1683	BRIDGETT	WHITE	WITHINGTON
WS 1683	MARGARET	TAYLOR	BREDBURY
WS 1683	ELIZABETH	KENT	NEWBOLD ASTBURY
WS 1683	ALICE	LACON	DUTTON
WS 1684	ELIZABETH	BAVAND	ECCLESTON
WS 1684	MARTHA	LITLER	BARNTON
WS 1684	MARY	JACKSON	STOCKPORT
WS 1684	ELIZABETH	HASLEHURST	BARNSHAW
WS 1684	REBECCA	HILL	KNUTSFORD
WS 1685	ELIZABETH	FURNIVALL	CHELFORD
WS 1685	MARY	ALCOCK	HOUGH
WS 1685	SARAH	STEEL	WILLASTON
WS 1685	ESTER	HAMNETT	BARTHOMLEY
WS 1685	KATHERINE	PULFORD	FARNDON
WS 1685	ELLEN	LOWE	ELTON
WS 1685	MARY	DAVENPORT	STOCKPORT

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1685	TABOTHA	LANCASTER	CHESTER
WS 1686	MARY	BROMHALL	WYCH MALBANK
WS 1686	DULCIBELLA	BUNBURY	STANNEY
WS 1686	MARY	HAYWARD	CHESTER
WS 1686	MARY	JEFFREYS	KNUTSFORD
WS 1686	MARY	POOLE	CHESTER
WS 1686	MARGARET	HASSALL	CAPETHORNE
WS 1686	MARY	WARRINGTON	CHESTER
WS 1686	BATHSHEBA	WEBBE	CHESTER
WS 1687	ANN	STRONGITHARME	CHESTER
WS 1687	ELLEN	KNIGHT	AUDLEM
WS 1687	MARY	READ	BUNBURY
WS 1688	ELIZABETH	ANTROBUS	MONKS HEATH
WS 1688	ANN	PRESCOTT	NORTON
WS 1688	MARY	BATHOE	HORTON
WS 1688	FRANCIS	LIVERSAGE	CONGLETON
WS 1689	LYDIA	ROYLE	DAVENHAM
WS 1689	ELIZABETH	WARBURTON	CHESTER
WS 1689	CHRISTIANA	WARBURTON	CHESTER
WS 1689	MARGERY	STUBBS	MARTON
WS 1689	GRACE	HYDE	BEESTON
WS 1690	JANE	SUTTON	AUDLEM
WS 1690	MARY	SELLARS	CHESTER
WS 1690	ANNE	TURNER	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1690	MARGARET	PENLINGTON	SANDBACH
WS 1690	FRANCIS	ASHTON	ASHLEY
WS 1691	ELLEN	ROBINSON	WALLASEY
WS 1691	ELIZABETH	STANAWAY	SANDBACH
WS 1691	JUDITH	WOOLEY	SMALLWOOD
WS 1691	DOROTHY	LEYCESTER	TOFT
WS 1691	ANN	WILLIAMS	CHESTER
WS 1691	JANE	MEE	ALLOSTOCK
WS 1691	ANN	GEARY	BUNBURY
WS 1691	MARY	RAVENS CROFT	CHESTER
WS 1691	ELLEN	FORD	ODD RODE
WS 1692	JANE	MOORE	ASTBURY
WS 1692	ANN	MOTTERSHEAD	HURDSFIELD
WS 1692	MARGARET	MASSEY	CREWE
WS 1692	MARY	HAMMERSLEY	CONGLETON
WS 1692	HELEN	COOKE	ASTON
WS 1692	MARY	ABELL	BURLEYDAM
WS 1692	MARTHA	HURLESTON	CHESTER
WS 1692	JOAN	TASKER	OVER ALDERLEY
WS 1693	MARGARET	BURGHALL	BEESTON
WS 1693	JANE	MORTON	HANKELow
WS 1693	MARY	HEYWOOD	MACCLESFIELD

Reference	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
WS 1694	MARY	MASSIE	CHESTER
WS 1694	MARTHA	REECE	CHESTER
WS 1695	MARY	CORLEY	MALPAS
WS 1695	MARY	JANNEY	ROSTHERNE
WS 1695	ELIZABETH	ANTROBUS	OVER PEOVER
WS 1696	CATHERINE	HURLBERT	TATTON
WS 1696	MARY	STRETCH	CHURCH HULME
WS 1696	JANE	SMITH	WARMINGHAM
WS 1696	ELIZABETH	WHITNEY	COOLE
WS 1696	ALICE	ROE	TAXALL
WS 1697	MARY	HATTON	DUDDOM
WS 1697	ANN	LEYCESTER	TOFT
WS 1698	JANE	LAMB	HALE
WS 1698	ANN	GALLAMORE	BETCHTON
WS 1698	MARY	MOSS	EATON
WS 1698	ELIZABETH	OULTON	CHOLMONDELEY
WS 1699	DOROTHY	SHEPLEY	MACCLESFIELD
WS 1699	MARGARET	ALSAGER	ALSAGER
WS 1699	ELIZABETH	SWINTON	KNUTSFORD
WS 1699	FRANCES	LEVERSAGE	BETCHTON
WS 1699	ALICE	KIRKMAN	MANLEY
WS 1699	ANN	BARLOW	CHESTER
WS 1699	MARY	MEAKIN	UTKINTON
WS 1699	MARGARET	SPARROW	NANTWICH
WS 1699	ELIZABETH	KEY	MIDDLEWICK
WS 1700	MARGARET	GRINDLEY	RUSHTON
WS 1700	ISABEL	ROYLE	LITTLE HASSALL
WS 1700	JANE	OWEN	GLOVERSTONE
WS 1700	HANNAH	BUCKLEY	CONGLETON

Appendix VI

Lincoln female sample

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 96/94	1601	JOHAN	PEDDER	FREISTON
INV 94/103	1601	MARGARET	MARSHALL	BRANDON IN HOUGH (ON THE HILL)
INV 97/325	1604	JOANE	HODGSON	GRANTHAM
INV 98/190	1604	MARY	BRASBRIDGE	HALTON HOLGATE
INV 100/148	1604	EM	HAILL	RAITHBY
INV 98/57	1604	ANNE	ELSAM	BARKSTONE
INV 100/73	1605	MARGARET	PADLEY	FRAMPTON
INV 101/424	1606	ELIZABETH	PEARS	HAVERHOLME MILNES
INV 101/131	1606	ANNE	SLATOR	FLEET
INV 101/413	1607	ANNE	COOKE	GRANTHAM
INV 105/89	1608	ISABELL	HOMES	HOLBEACH
INV 107A/21	1608	AGNES	HOULDING	WELBY
INV 102/228	1608	ELIZABETH	STEVENSON	SOUTH ?
INV 107B/2	1608	ALSE	COLSONE	WESTON
INV 107B/189	1609	SARA	WILKINSON	DIGBY
INV 106/335	1609	CATHERYN	GILDING	OSBORNBY
INV 109/116	1610	MARY	PRATT	BOSTON
INV 109/166	1610	ELLYN	MAWER	LANGTON NR HORNCastle
INV 109/444	1611	ANNE	CALDWELL	BRIGG
INV 110/9	1611	ANNE	PANNEL	BLYTON
INV 109/80	1611	ANN	BOOTHBIE	LITTLE HALE
INV 112A/243	1612	MARGARET	SCHEPHEARD	SWINESHEAD
INV 112A/174	1612	JOANE	COCK	SUTTON
INV 112B/443	1612	JANE	TAYLER	CAYTHORPE
INV 112A/142	1612	ISABELL	JAMES	GREAT GRIMSBY
INV 112A/258	1612	SUSAN	VEREY	CONINGSBY
INV 113/305	1613	SUZANNE	TRIGGE	GRANTHAM
INV 113/385	1613	GRACE	MAY	(SUTTON) LUTTON
INV 113/291	1613	KATHERIN	WILKINSON	DIGBY
INV 113/231	1613	ANNIS	SANDALL	DUNSBY
INV 113/520	1613	EMME	DIGLE	(SUTTON) LUTTON
INV 116/135	1614	AGNES	NICHOLLS	SWAYFIELD
INV 116/183	1614	BRIGIT	NEWLOVE	GRANTHAM
INV 115/220	1615	BRIDGET	SCOTERICKE	INGOLDMELLS
INV 117/405	1615	ANN	LEMON	QUADRING
INV 115/179	1615	BETTERIS	BEWERLAY	GRAINTHORPE
INV 115/43	1615	AMY	PEARSON	IRBY
INV 115/285	1615	MAGDALEN	FRESHNEY	COCKERINGTON
INV 118/186	1616	MARGARET	WILKINSON	ROUGHTON
INV 119/505	1616	PHILLIP(A)	WELBOARE	HOLBEACH
INV 119/381	1616	MARGIT	BETTES	GRANTHAM

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 119/622	1616	JANE	BEVERLEY	MIDDLE RASEN
INV 117/453	1616	MARGRET	TOMSON	EAST HALTON/KILLINGHOLME
INV 119/583	1616	FRANCIS	CANTES	DEEPING ST JAMES
INV 121/71	1616	ELIZABETH	WOODE	NORTH COTES
INV 119/321	1616	JAYNE	OULDFIELDE	FISHTOFT
INV 117/451	1616	ALICE	JENKINGE	GREAT COATES
INV 119/436	1616	AN	HICKSONNE	HALTON HOLGATE
INV 120/172	1617	GRACE	HERBERT	COLEBY
INV 119/516	1617	BRIDGITT	WEBB	BRIGG
INV 120/174	1617	MARGERY	PARNELL	LYNBIE
INV 119/570	1617	JUDITH	SWEETE	GRIMOLDBY
INV 119/594	1617	DOROTHY	HARPAM	ORBY
INV 119/555	1617	SARAE	TOYNTON	BOSTON
INV 123/62	1620	JANE	ROBINSON	BILLINGHAY
INV 124/38	1620	JOAN	ANDERSON	WINTERINGHAM
INV 124/120	1621	MARGARET	FORBESSE	BENINGTON
INV 124/176	1621	MARGARET	STOW	WESTBURGH
INV 125/105	1621	ANNE	SIMONDS	STAMFORD
INV 124/104	1621	CHRISTINE	SOPPE	GOSBERKERK
INV 126/79	1621	HESTER	BURNETT	SUTTON
INV 125/104	1621	ANN	ANTHONYE	STAMFORD
INV 109/475	1621	ANE	MARSHALL	SWATON
INV 125/152	1622	ANN	WILSON	BENINGTON
INV 127/136	1622	MARGARET	ELLDRED	WHAPLODE
INV 127/237	1623	MARY	PINDER	WELBY
INV 127/3	1623	MARGERIE	CHAPMAN	GOXHILL
INV 128/308	1624	ALLIS	STOCKDALE	TETNEY
INV 128/210	1624	KATHEREN	SMITH	LINCOLN
INV 129/61	1624	ISABELL	BOWER	BOSTON
INV 130/5	1625	MARGARET	LOVELL	MOULTON
INV 129/200	1625	EDITH	HOBBIN	COLEBY
INV 130/55	1625	ANNE	HOGG	SKIRBECK
INV 129/180	1625	MARY	CLARKE	KILLINGHOLME/EAST HALTON
INV 128/399	1625	ANNE	BAULDOCKE	NORTH WILLINGHAM
INV 130/320	1625	ISSABELL	TACKILL	GOXHILL
INV 130/12	1625	ALICE	LINCOLN	LEAKE
INV 131/150	1626	JOANE	CLAXON	TYDD ST MARY
INV 131/44	1626	EINIE	THARRALDE	GRAINTHORPE
INV 130/390	1626	ALLICE	PINCHBECK	FREISTON
INV 131/331	1626	AMY	EASTWOOD	HOLBEACH
INV 132/84	1627	KATHERIN	SOLEY	WIGTOFT
INV 132/86	1627	ANN	COOLE	BICKER
INV 132/449	1627	URSULA	WRIGHT	CAYTHORPE
INV 132/81	1627	ALLICE	FARROWE	BOSTON
INV 132/211	1627	SUSANNA	TUPHAM	FREISTON

LCC AD 1628/101	1628	MARGARET	FERRIBIE	BARTON ON HUMBER
INV 133/108	1628	FAYTH	DAWBNEY	?
INV 132/334	1628	JANE	FLOWER	ST SWITHINS, LINCOLN
INV 133/98	1628	ANN	CROFT	MUMBY CHAPEL
INV 135/196	1629	MARGARET	CLARKE	HORNCastle
INV 135/50	1629	ANN	MAM	WIGTOFT
INV 135/295	1629	ELIZABETH	COPELAND	FULSTOW
INV 134/232	1629	ISABELL	HESSeldINE	STAMFORD
INV 136/228	1630	MARIE	PAULE	CUMBERWORTH
INV 137/218	1630	ANNE	BYRD	SPALDING
INV 136/215	1630	MARIE	WINSHIPPE	GOXHILL
INV 138/52	1631	JANE	BAKER	BULBY
INV 137/228	1631	ALICE	FLEETE	HOLBEACH
INV 136/377	1631	ELIZABETH	TRIGGE	?
INV 138/176	1631	DORRITHIE	HOLLINGWORTH	ST SWITHINS, LINCOLN
INV 138/198	1631	MARY	SPARROW	HOUGH ON THE HILL
INV 137/40	1631	JUDETH	CHAPMAN	BOLINGBROKE
INV 138/169	1632	JONE	GAWTHERNE	HORBLING
INV 137/216	1632	SUSAN	THEWSTON	BENINGTON
INV 139/351	1632	AGNES	HAMMAN	LEAKE
INV 139/44	1632	ALICE	PAWLTON	ST SWITHINS, LINCOLN
INV 140/153	1633	AGNES	BROUGH	LEAKE
INV 140/225	1633	PRUDENCE SNR	KING	MORTON
INV 140/12	1633	ELLEN	BRIGGES	SOUTH WITHAM
INV 140/118	1633	ANNE	YOULE	BRIGG
INV 140/19	1633	ALICE	BAYLES	STALLINGBOROUGH
INV 142/8	1634	MARY	GOOD	BRIGG IN WRAWBY
INV 142/3	1634	ELIZABETH	WOODBRIDGE	SIBSEY
INV 141/199	1634	PRUDENCE	ANDREWE	LITTLE HALE
INV 141/210B	1634	ANN	ELWARD	MUMBY CHAPEL
INV 141/334	1634	JANE	BREDSHAWE	BUTTERWORTH
INV 142/118	1635	ROSE	RITCHINSON	FREISTON
INV 141/315	1635	AGNES	TOOTE	SALTFLEET IN SKIDBROOKE
INV 142/136	1635	MARYE	BALYE	RAND
INV 142/132	1635	ANE	MUSGRAVE	CAENBY
INV 143/127	1635	ELLIN	CHAMBERLIN	CAWTHORPE
INV 144/317	1636	ISSABELL	SIVERS	KIRTON (LINDSEY)
INV 144/204	1636	WINIFRED	RIDDENS	HONINGTON
INV 145/326	1637	ANN	NEALE	BARNETBY
INV 145/37	1637	MARGARET	DALTON	BOSTON
INV 145/216	1637	MARGARET	FISHER	MOULTON
INV 145/125	1637	JENNITT	COOKE	TIMBERLAND
INV 145/81	1637	FRANCIS	GREENE	WIBERTON
INV 148/27	1638	MARY	BORROW	FRAMPTON
INV 147/23	1638	ANNE	HURDMAN	WITHERN

INV 145/237	1638	GRACE	INGOLDBY	FREISTON
INV 149/255	1639	MARY	KINGE	ASHBY DE LA LAUND
INV 149/122	1639	SARAH	IRELAND	LANGTON NR HORNCastle
INV 148/138	1639	KATHERYN	WARD	KEELBY
INV 150B/398	1639	MAUDLIN	MARLEY	MUMBY CHAPEL
INV 150B/456	1640	MARY	BAN---	WIGTOFT
INV 150/82	1640	MARY	MONSON	LINCOLN
INV 150B/420	1640	WINIFRED	BURWELL	BURTOFT
INV 150/136	1640	ELIZABETH	FRIDLE	NORTH THORESBy
INV 151/113	1641	MARGARET	LAUGHTON	LINCOLN
INV 151/95	1642	URSULA	DAWSON	ANDERBY
INV 151/46	1643	MARY	MA---ALL	FISHTOFT
INV 153/59	1644	MAUDLIN	DAWSON	ANDERBY
INV 154/177	1648	ANN	WALKER	CROFT
INV 155/108	1650	JONE	TUPLIN	UTTERBY
INV 165/264	1657	MARY	MELL	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 159A/100	1661	ELIZABETH	CIME	RAITHBY
INV 159A/31	1661	SARAH	YEWLE	EAST KIRKBY
INV 158/38	1661	JANNE	GREENE	SIXHILLS
INV 159A/80	1661	MARY	DOWTIE	SCOTTER
INV 159B/52	1661	URSILLAR	RAKES	MARKET RASEN
INV 161/35	1662	FRANCES	BUCK	GRANTHAM
INV 160/23	1662	SUSAN	PEDDER	FREISTON
INV 161/38	1662	MARY	PETCH	TETNEY
INV 160/211	1662	BRIFGIT	PILGRAM	KIRTON
INV 161/93	1662	DORATHIE	HARGRAVE	BOSTON
INV 160/24	1662	ELIZABETH	?	FOLKINGHAM
INV 160/182	1662	ELLEN	GOODALE	BOSTON
INV 160/114	1662	ANN SNR	WOOD	CRAISELOUND IN HAXEY
INV 160/70	1662	ISABELL	CROXON	LEAKE
INV 162/243	1663	ANN	MARRES	EAST HALTON/KILLINGHOLME
INV 162/183	1663	ELIZABETH	WINCKLE	WADDINGTON
INV 160/239	1663	ESTHER	BRIAN	HORBLING
INV 163/181	1664	KATHERIN	PROCKTER	NORTH SCARLE
INV 163/91	1664	MARY	SAMSON	MINTING PARK, GAUTBY
INV 162/235	1664	ANN	OGLE	PINCHBECK
INV 163/130	1664	ANN	FAULKNER	LONDONTHORPE
INV 165/24	1665	ANN	RIDAT	SWINESHEAD
INV 165/25	1665	SARAH	COVERLAH	WAINFLEET ST MARY
INV 166/296	1666	ELIZABETH	FOTHERBY	BOSTON
INV 166/1	1666	KATHERINE	SCROPE	COCKERINGTON
INV 167/60	1667	MARY	WAKE	WEST TORRINGTON
INV 168/301	1668	ANNE	ELLIS	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 168/257	1668	ELIZABETH	ROOKEBY	HORNCastle
INV 167/191	1668	ANNE	TASKER	FILLINGHAM
INV 168/100	1668	MARY	MORRISON	QUADRING
INV 165/5	1669	HANNAH	DIXON	BOSTON

INV 169/207	1669	ELIZABETH	HARDIE	BRANDON IN HOUGH (ON THE HILL)
INV 169/378	1669	ROSAMUND	WINTER	CABOURNE
INV 168/37	1669	MARY	DICKENSON	STICKNEY
INV 169/348	1669	SARA	GROMITT	SOUTH RESTON
INV 168/213	1669	ANN	STENNETT	EWERBY
INV 172/396	1669	ELIZABETH	STARKIE	HAXEY
INV 170/139	1669	ELIZABETH	TEALBY	COLEBY
INV 170/68	1669	MARGRIT	BELTON	THEALBY
INV 169/108	1669	ANN	WAMSLEY	GRIMOLDBY
INV 171/26A	1670	CATERIN	JACKSON	EAST FERRY
INV 172/96	1670	ELIZABETH	MILLIES	NORTH SOMERCOTES
INV 220/245	1670	MARY	FOSTER	WINTERINGHAM
INV 169/77	1670	GILLIAN	BARNARD	ULCEBY
INV 172/168	1671	ELIZABETH	BUCKE	LITTLE STEEPING
INV 171/120	1671	ISABELL	DREWRIE	CRAISELOUND IN HAXEY
INV 175/391	1672	ANN	RAWSON	EDLINGTON
INV 175/169	1672	ALICE	PHILIPPS	THURLBY
INV 175/101	1672	ELIZABETH	SIMPSON	EAST KIRKBY
INV 175/159	1672	SARAH	ALBARNES	BENNIWORTH
INV 175/321	1672	JANE	LEAVES	SPALDING
INV 175/181	1672	ELIZABETH	HODGSON	CROFT
INV 174/222	1672	ANN	HOLMES	SOUTH SOMERCOTES
INV 175/175	1672	MARY	ANTON	CROFT
INV 174/278	1673	ELIZABETH	NUNWICKE	NORMANBY (LE WOLD)
INV 174/82	1673	SUSANNA	JULIAN	LEVERTON
INV 178/29	1674	SUSANNA	MATTERSEY	KNAITH
INV 176/40	1674	ELIZABETH	HORBY	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 178/64	1675	ELIN	BAYLE	BRUMBY IN FRODINGHAM
INV 177/80	1675	MARRY	FLETCHER	MOULTON
INV 177/288	1675	MARIE	KNIGHT	GONWARBY
INV 177/245	1675	ALICE	SHERIF	COLEBY
INV 178/89	1675	JANE	THOMPSON	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 178/354	1675	MARTHA	PHILLIP	LUDDINGTON
INV 177/156	1675	MARY	RILEY	WELBOURN
INV 180/481	1676	ELIZABETH	QUENING BROWN	FOLKINGHAM
INV 179/120	1676	ELIZABETH	GARNER	THORPE
INV 177/136	1676	MARY	CHAPMAN	BOSTON
INV 178/153	1677	ELIZABETH	DUCKER	BURNHAM
INV 178/367	1677	ELIZABETH	POPLEWELL	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 178/325	1678	MARY	HALLEYFIELD	BLYTON
INV 178/256	1678	ALSE	MAW	EALAND IN CROWLE
INV 181/70	1679	ANN	ROSE	WIBERTON
INV 180/308	1679	MARIE	BEALE	SOUTH WITHAM
INV 180/387	1679	ANN	EASEMAN	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 181/44	1679	MARY	FORTE	BLYTON
INV 181/127	1679	RUTH	MAPLETOFT	BRATTLEBY

INV 180/203	1679	FRANCIS	SALMON	CARLTON SCROOP
INV 180/121	1679	BRIDGETT	LEAKE	BOSTON
INV 178/202	1679	ANN	CHAPMAN	SCOTHERN
INV 182A/87	1681	HANNAH	GOODWIN	SPILSBY
INV 182A/195	1681	BARBARA	HAREBY	ASHBY BY PARTNEY
INV 181/33	1681	ANNE	KITCHING	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 181/149	1681	JANE	HILL	NORTH COTES
INV 182/95	1681	MARY	CARTAR	EAGLE
INV 182/15	1681	SARA	WELBE	BICKER
INV 182A/184	1681	DOROTHY	LEACH	LINCOLN
INV 182/237	1681	JANE	LICEN	ASHBY CUM FENBY
INV 182/159	1681	MARY	MARCH	RIPPINGALE
INV 182/358	1681	FRANCES	PINCHBECKE	BOSTON
INV 184/76	1683	ALICE	BARR	NORMANBY
INV 183/132	1683	MARY	DOWDSWELL	EAST RANDALL
INV 185/37	1683	ELIZABETH	GILBERT	BUTTERWICK
INV 184/109	1683	MARY	HOLLAND	CRAISELOUND IN HAXEY
INV 183/249	1683	ELIZABETH	METHERINGHAM	GRANTHAM
INV 185A/20	1684	MARY	ROBSON	RUSKINGTON
INV 184/95	1684	ELIZABETH	TOYNETON	LANGWORTH
INV 186/326	1685	HELLEN	SPEEDE	GOXHILL
INV 186/158	1685	MARGARET	CAWKWELL	MESSINGHAM
INV 187/151	1687	BRIDGET (MRS)	PHILLIPS	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 187/28	1688	JUDITH	COOK	GREAT GRIMSBY
INV 188/33	1688	MARY	SMITH	HAREBY
INV 188/133	1688	MARY	BAXTER	BUTTERWICK
INV 184/5	1690	SARAH	GARVIS	BLYTON
INV 182A/167	1691	JOANE	BROWNE	MORTON
INV 182/174	1691	SUSANNAH	TUNNARD	BOSTON
INV 189/18	1691	ALICE	GREASHAM	MARTON
INV 190/105	1691	JANE (MRS)	FARMERY	NORTHORPE
INV 190/207	1692	BRIDGETT	STOCKS	SCOTTER
INV 190/31	1692	SARAH	COOKE	CANWICK
INV 190/65	1692	ELIZABETH	PRESCOD	HOLTON CUM BECKERING
INV 189/231	1692	JAINE	LOBLAH	INGHAM
INV 190/104	1692	ANN	FORTE	GREAT GRIMSBY
INV 190/418	1693	CATHERINE	BAILEY	NORMANBY LE WOLD
INV 191/134	1693	RACHEL	ELLINGWORTH	WOOTTON
INV 190/119	1693	MARGARET	WHITLAM	OWSTON
INV 192/9	1694	ALICE	GRANTHAM	BARROW
INV 191/241	1695	ELINER	INGAMELL	COVENHAM
INV 192/135	1696	ELIZABETH	BURRILL	ALGARKIRK
INV 192/120	1696	MARY	THARRALD	BARNOLDBY LE BECK
INV 193/200	1697	FRANCIS	HANSON	NEWTON
INV 193/272	1697	ALICE	ROBINSON	HABROUGH
INV 193/248	1698	ELIZABETH	PROCTOR	BARTON ON HUMBER
INV 194/102	1699	ELIZABETH	LITTLEOVER	LINCOLN

INV 194/36	1699	ANN	SCUTT	WINTERINGHAM
INV 194/375	1700	ELIZABETH	LYNDLEY	CASTLE CARLETON
INV 194/362	1700	ELIZABETH	CAMPLIN	GRIMOLDBY

Appendix VII

Lincolnshire male sample

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 94/60	1601	JHON	PANTHREE	FOSDYKE IN ALGARKIRKE
INV 94/90	1601	JOHN	SMYTH	BORWELL
INV 94/77	1601	NICHOLAS	CLIFFE	NORTH HYKEHAM
INV 97/73	1603	GILBERT	TITTON	GEDNEY
INV 97/184	1603	WILLIAM	THOROLD	NORTH THORESBY
INV 97/132	1603	JOHN	SMYTH	SURFLEET
INV 97/182	1603	JHON	HARBY	FLEET
INV 96/78	1603	WILLIAM	SALE	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 98/88	1604	HUGH	SAWER	BARTON UPON HUMBER
INV 98/67	1604	EDMUND	BART	BECKINGHAM
INV 100/165	1604	WILLIAM	JACKLING	BEELSBY
INV 98/242	1605	JOHN	BURTON	ASHBY
INV 98/230	1605	ANTHONY	PENESTONE	KIRTON
INV 100/195	1605	GARYE	GRESBYE	GOXHILL
INV 100/107	1605	CHRISTOPHER	GOODWIN	BOOTHBY GRAFFOE
INV 100/142	1605	WILLIAM	HARRISON	BOSTON
INV 101/298	1606	THOMAS	CHAMPION	DODDINGTON IN WESTBURGH
INV 101/135	1606	JOHN	PHILIP	BICKER
INV 101/67	1606	EDWARD	PETCHE	YARBURGH
INV 100/170	1606	SYMON	ATKINSON	RUSKINGTON
INV 102/146	1607	JOHN	ASHTON	SUTTON IN HOLLAND
INV 104/121	1607	CHARLES	PAULINGES	SIBSEY
INV 104/56	1607	JOHN	THOMPSON	MIDDLE RASEN
INV 101/373	1607	WILLIAM	DENNIS	STURTON MAGNA?
INV 107A/93	1608	HUMFRY	SAMPTSON	EAST KIRKBY
INV 105/146	1608	THOMAS	HAWDELL	WHAPLODE
INV 102/254	1608	THOMAS	MILLNES	FISHTOFT
INV 107A/55	1608	GEORGE	GENTLE	SOUTH KYME
INV 107A/115	1608	ZACHARIE	CAVE	MORTON
INV 102/62	1608	JOHN	MASON	GEDNEY
INV 107B/41	1608	GEORGE	DAY	GEDNEY
INV 105/105	1608	RICHARD	HARISON	ALGARKIRK
INV 105/270	1609	ANDREW	BRITTAN	FREISTON
INV 107B/120	1609	FRANCIS	HANTON	BENNIWORTH
INV 109/486	1610	GEORGE	DICKENSONNE	WHAPLODE
INV 109/270	1610	LAWRENCE	BOLTON	COWBITT
INV 109/376	1610	JOHN	FOWLLE	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 110/197A	1610	WILLIAM	LONGLEY	WILLINGHAM BY STOW
INV 109/279	1610	WILLIAM	ADDEN	FOLKINGHAM
INV 111/92	1611	BENNET	SEARGENT	THORNTON NR HORNCastle
INV 111/266A	1611	ANTHONIE	CHAPMAN	WHAPLODE
INV 109/104	1611	JOHN	BALL	WIBERTON

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 109/563	1612	WILLIAM	HARDIE	PANTON
INV 112A/229	1612	JOHN	DREWERIE	MORTON
INV 111/271	1612	JOHN	DOWSE	FREISTON
INV 112A/234	1612	PETER	CLEARY	TUMBY WOODSIDE
INV 112A/62	1612	WILLIAM	TUNARD	TEBSEY
INV 112A/260	1612	LEONARD	HARRIS	WITHAM ON THE HILL
INV 112A/14	1612	GEORGE	WILSON	TATHWELL
INV 113/450	1613	ROBERT	THOMPSON	BOURNE
INV 113/75	1613	SIMON	WATSON	FREISTON
INV 113/243	1613	JEFFERYE	WATERS	LOUND
INV 113/333	1613	ROBERT	PELL	BURTON PEDWARDINE
INV 113/444	1613	THOMAS	PUTTOCKE	BUTTERWICK
INV 113/155	1613	RICE	ROWE	METHERINGHAM
INV 113/293	1613	ANTHONIE	SAGRAVE	HELPRINGHAM
INV 113/366	1613	WILLIAM	SWEETE	ANDERBY
INV 114/40	1614	PETER	GISSON	HALTHAM ON BAIN
INV 114/137	1614	JOHN	TALOR	SUTTERBY
INV 114/8	1614	WILLIAM	BUNBY	CLAXBY
INV 114/33	1614	VINCENT	SKEGNES	ALFORD
INV 114/66	1614	WILLIAM	JOHNSON	CROFT
INV 113/227	1614	FRANCIS	PANKE	LOUND
INV 114/11	1614	NICHOLAS	PIGG	TYDD ST MARY
INV 114/373	1614	HAROLDE	BURNEBIE	BOLINGBROKE
INV 114/88	1614	WILLIAM	NICHOLSON	LUDBOROUGH
INV 115/227	1615	ROBERT	MALTBY	BELCHFORD
INV 117/294	1615	THOMAS	MINSTER	TYDD ST MARY
INV 115/134	1615	WILLIAM	FLETCHER	FRISKNEY
INV 116/199	1615	CHRISTOPHER	HACKWORTH	POTTERHANWORTH
INV 117/526	1615	ROBERT	HILL	SUTTON ST MARY'S
INV 117/306	1615	WILLIAM	WILLIAMSON	SUTTERTON
INV 117/379	1615	JAMES	JOHNSON	SWINESHEAD
INV 117/361	1615	FRANCIS	NAYLER	KEELBY
INV 119/323	1616	WILLIAM	KELSEY	SKIRBECK
INV 119/406	1616	RICHARD	WALTON	LANGTOFT
INV 117/513	1616	GEORGE	BLADES	MAVIS ENDERBY
INV 118/214	1616	GILBERT	MARRYATT	EASTON
INV 118/246	1616	CHRISTOPHER	SMITH	WHAPLODE
INV 118/171	1616	ROBERT	KIRKE	THREEKINGHAM
INV 120/158	1617	HENRY	ALLAM	DEEPING ST JAMES
INV 120/104	1617	WILLIAM	BORMAN	LUDBOROUGH
INV 119/547	1617	CHRISTOPHER	HUTCHINSON	SCUPHOLM IN SOMERCOTTS
INV 119/531	1617	WILLIAM	WRIGHT	CANWICK
INV 122/27	1618	THOMAS	FRANCIS	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 121/108	1618	THOMAS	MAWER	BURGH IN THE MARSH
INV 121/196	1618	NATHANIEL	SMITH	HORNCASTLE
INV 121/312	1618	JOHN	KNIGHTE	ROPSLEY

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
LCC AD 1618/205	1619	JOHN	TOWLE	BARTON UPON HUMBER
INV 123/240	1620	WILLIAM	WHYTE	LUDFORD
INV 123/449	1620	RICHARD	MELLERS	BARDNEY
INV 123/96	1620	JOHN	ARNOLD	LEAKE
INV 123/461	1620	WILLIAM	NELSON	GOXHILL
INV 123/262	1620	ROBERT	MARSHALL	BESBY
INV 123/98	1620	JOHN	LOKE	ALGARKIRK
INV 125/18	1621	WILLIAM	BURNHAM	GRANTHAM
INV 123/462	1621	EDWARD	GROMETT	EDENHAM
INV 125/89	1621	SALOMON	JACKSON	GREAT GRIMSBY
INV 125/169	1622	SAMUEL	TEWKE	FLEET
INV 127/332	1624	WILLIAM	COTTAM	DODDINGTON (PIGOTT)
INV 127/317	1624	CHRISTOPHER	NAYLER	EAST RASEN
INV 128/397	1625	ANTHONIE	COXHEAD	GREAT STEEPING
INV 129/121	1625	CHRISTOPHER	WILSON	MANBY
INV 130/249	1625	MATHEWE	DOUTE	MIDDLE RASEN
INV 130/21	1625	GABRIELL	WADDINGHAM	BOSTON
INV 130/8	1625	JOHN	WATER	UFFINGTON
INV 130/224	1625	NICHOLAS	RASER	ALGARKIRK
INV 129/251	1625	MICHAELL	JACKSON	EAST HALTON/KILLINGHOLME
INV 128/387	1625	EDWARD	HODGSON	EAST HALTON/KILLINGHOLME
INV 130/431	1626	RICHARD	BROWNE	GRANTHAM
INV 131/381	1626	THOMAS	LINCOLNE	NORTH SOMERCOTES
INV 131/521	1626	THOMAS	FARRER	WIBERTON
INV 130/346	1626	ROBERT	CHILD	BOSTON
INV 131/374	1626	RICHARD	PANNOT	GOXHILL
INV 131/11	1626	THOMAS	PEACHELL	NORMANTON
INV 130/403	1626	RICHARD	ATKIN	EAST KEAL
INV 131/208	1626	PETER	COSIN	FREISTON
INV 131/498	1627	EDWARD	LAWIS	BUTTERWICK
INV 132/35	1627	JOHN	STANNANOT	YARBURGH
INV 131/467	1627	THOMAS	GULL	ANWICK
INV 133/33	1628	THOMAS	BELL	ALGARKIRK
INV 134/104	1628	RICHARD	NORTON	GOSBERTON
INV 133/173	1628	GEORGE	BIRDITH	KELSTERN
INV 134/219	1628	SYMON	HUCHINSON	BICKER
INV 133/155	1628	ROGER	ANDREW	STAPLEFORD
INV 135/23	1629	JOHN	HARRISON	GOXHILL
INV 135/82	1629	ANDREW	WRIGHT	HOGSTHORPE
INV 134/202	1629	RICHARD	GREENALL	HORNCastle
INV 135/265	1629	SAMUEL	GRESBY	WRANGLE
INV 135/38	1629	SIMON	MARKHAM	WOOTTON
INV 136/465	1630	JOHN	RAYNOR	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 136/290	1630	JOHN	PACIE	CARLTON IN MORELAND
INV 36/508	1630	THOMAS	MUCKELL	SWINESHEAD

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 137/197	1630	RICHARD	DOVE	SIBSEY
INV 137/8	1630	THOMAS	LOAKE	ALGARKIRK
INV 136/230	1630	ANTHONY	MITCHELL	WIGTOFT
INV 136/451	1630	WILLIAM	TINGLE	KIRTON (IN LINDSEY)
INV 137/4	1631	ROBERT	THOMPSON	HORNCastle
INV 137/194	1631	RECHARD	RENOWLDE	SKIRBECK
INV 137/74	1631	AUGUSTINE	NEWCOME	CAYTHORPE
INV 138/108	1631	WILLIAM	RAANDS	BUCKNALL
INV 138/162	1631	WILLIAM	MACKNALL	BOSTON
INV 137/135	1631	ROBERT	STOWE	GEDNEY
INV 138/138	1631	WILLIAM	REVILL	KIRTON (LINCOLN)
INV 139/245	1632	PHILLIPP	TEFFE	MIDDLE RASEN
INV 139/166	1632	JOHN	JOYCE	WHAPLODE
INV 139/4	1632	JOHN	BALDACK	SOUTH RESTON
INV 137/23	1632	MILES	FOWLER	GOSBERTON
INV 139/253	1632	ANTONY	PEPPAR	FISHTOFT
INV 139/299	1632	ANTHONY	WRIGHT	EWERBY
INV 139/124	1633	WILLIAM	PADDYSON	MUMBY CHAPEL
INV 140/278	1633	GEORGE	NORTON	GREAT CARLTON
INV 140/248	1633	RICHARD	PINDER	SUTTON ST MARY
INV 141/111	1634	ANTHONY	HICKSON	HELPRINGHAM
INV 141/175	1634	MATTHEW	JACKSON	GOSBERKERK
INV 141/242	1634	WILLIAM	HULL	GEDNEY
INV 141/28	1634	CHRISTOPHER	THORP	FULLETBY
INV 143/290	1635	JOHN	UTTERBIE	MIDDLE RASEN
INV 143/75	1635	THOMAS	GAWDGE	FISHTOFT
INV 144/332	1636	WILLIAM	KENINGTHORPE	WELTON
INV 144/291	1636	EDWARD	ANDERSON	STALLINGBOROUGH
INV 145/47	1637	THOMAS	HEWSON	WALTHAM
INV 145/144	1637	RICHARD	DRURY	ULCEBY
INV 145/180	1637	WILLIAM	BAITS	BARTON UPON HUMBER
INV 145/259	1638	THOMAS	SCORTRETH	TRUSTHORPE THORPE
INV 147/2	1638	THOMAS	MIDDLEBROOKE	HEIGHINGTON
INV 147/236	1638	WILLIAM	SMITHSON	NETTLETON
INV 147/71	1638	THOMAS	METHERINGHAM	CAYTHORPE
INV 147/174	1638	THOMAS	RICHARDSON	BLEASBY, NOTTS
INV 147/41	1638	WILLIAM JNR	PHILIP	CROWLAND
INV 146/128	1638	RICHARD	HODGSON	FIRTHBANK IN SIBSEY
INV 146/210	1638	WILLIAM	DURHAM	SEDGEBROOK
INV 147/22	1638	WILLIAM	DRURY	ULCEBY
INV 150B/607	1639	ROBERT	SMITH	GREAT HALE
INV 149/52	1639	WILLIAM	WRIGHT	DEEPING ST JAMES
INV 149/60	1639	RICHARD	BOOLE	BULBY
INV 149/131	1639	MATHEW	PINSHIST	ANWICK
INV 149/157	1639	HENRY	LITTLER	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 150B/385	1640	GEORGE	COOPER	NOCTON

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 150/240	1640	WILLIAM	COULTON	APLEY
INV 150/78	1640	MATHEW	MICHELL	BLANKNEY
INV 150/94	1640	THOMAS	RATHBIE	GRAINTHORPE
INV 150B/418	1641	ROBERT	BOSTON	WELBOURN
INV 153/186	1644	GEORGE	BASNETT	RIBY
INV 154/234	1647	RICHARD	SMITH	SKIRBECK
INV 154/195	1647	ROBERT	MASEY	BOSTON
INV 154/194	1648	JOHN JNR	RUDD	QUADRING
INV 154/17	1648	JOHN	TAYLOR	ADDLETHORPE
INV 154/586	1648	WILLIAM	DAWSON	HOGSTHORPE
INV 154/23	1648	PETER	PINCHBECK	FREISTON
INV 154/25	1648	JOHN	BARKWITH	THEDDLETHORPE
INV 154/556	1648	EDWARD	ROWBOTHAM	MUMBY CHAPEL
INV 156/44	1653	RICHARD	BERPE	LONG BENNINGTON
INV 160/167	1654	WILLIAM	KNOWLES	NORTON (DISNEY)
INV 158/272	1660	RICHARD	TOYNE	NETTLEHAM
INV 159A/67	1661	THOMAS	CROWDER	GLENTWORTH
INV 161/100	1661	WILLIAM	GILDEN	FREISTON
INV 159A/122	1661	JOHN	MASON	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 158/141	1661	WILLIAM	SUTABY	WAINFLEET
INV 159A/126	1661	SYMON	RANSHAW	SPRIDLINGTON
INV 159B/55	1661	THOMAS	BAXTER	SWALLOW
INV 160/18	1662	ROBERT	FAWLING	?
INV 160/26	1662	HENRY	STALINGBOR	FULSTOW
INV 159B/41	1662	THOMAS	JAQUES	EPWORTH
INV 161/18	1662	RICHARD	RANDALL	MALTBY IN THE MARSH
INV 161/95	1662	JOHN	UFFIN	FREISTON
INV 159B/65	1662	JOSEPH	MORFOOT	FREISTON
INV 162/104	1663	RICHARD	PEAKER	THORNTON LE MOOR
INV 160/196	1663	GEORGE	SEARGEANT	CROFT
INV 162/328	1663	ROBERT	MACKRELL	HOLBEACH
INV 162/46	1663	THOMAS	?	HABROUGH
INV 162/276	1663	WILLIAM	GLEDWIN	SUTTERTON
INV 162/31	1663	THOMAS	FOSTER	KIRMINGTON
INV 164/26	1664	CHARLES	NEWBORNE	HAXEY
INV 164/95	1664	WILLIAM	MORRTON	GREAT HALE
INV 221B/271	1664	ADEODATUS	HODGESON	WINTERINGHAM
INV 162/360	1664	JOHN	WATTERLAND	CRAISELOUND IN HAXEY
INV 163/82	1664	WILLIAM	CROOKER	BOSTON
INV 163/67	1664	THOMAS	BURRELL	GOXHILL
INV 165/23	1665	THOMAS	TAPP	KILLINGHOLME/EAST HALTON
INV 165/301	1665	STEPHEN	WALMSLEY	MUMBY CHAPEL
INV 164/127	1665	ROBERT	POYNTER	HAXEY
INV 165/51	1665	WILLIAM	WRIGHT	HOGSTHORPE
INV 165/171	1665	WILLIAM	BOND	CONISHOLME
INV 166/77	1666	ROBERT	BUCKNALL	WEST TORRINGTON

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 166/49	1666	THOMAS JNR	JOHNSON	WINTHORPE
INV 175/43	1667	JOHN	BURR	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 167/93	1667	EDWARD	BLYTH	BARNETBY
INV 169/367	1668	THOMAS	EASTWOOD	SUTTON ST JAMES
INV 167A/35	1668	DATUS	SHANKESTER	EPWORTH
INV 168/274	1668	JOHN	PECK	BLYBOROUGH
INV 168/281	1668	WILLIAM	ROBINSON	THORPE IN LE FALLOWS
INV 167/154	1668	JAMES	SEALAND	BELTON
INV 169/314	1668	JOHN	KING	BOSTON
INV 168/68	1668	WILLIAM	TOOLEY	FRAMPTON
INV 169/398	1669	WILLIAM	PEDDER	FREISTON
INV 170/17	1669	ROBERT	WHEATLEY	NETTLEHAM
INV 169/321	1669	THOMAS	THACKER	HOLBEACH
INV 169/468	1669	WILLIAM	GRONE	CROFT
INV 167A/53	1669	WILLIAM	CAM	BURTON
INV 170/145	1669	JOHN	TOMLINSON	BLYTON
INV 170/126	1669	GEORGE	BOWREING	BURTON COGGLES
INV 169/469	1669	MICHAEL	HOWETT	GREAT HALE
INV 169/94	1669	JOHN	LEABAND	HANTHORPE IN MORTON
INV 172/214	1670	THOMAS	THORROLD	BARNOLDBY LE BECK
INV 171/26	1670	ROBERT	THEAKER	EAST FERRY
INV 170/78	1670	JOHN	CHAPMAN	EPWORTH
INV 170/108	1670	JOHN	CLARKE	EPWORTH
INV 172/125	1670	JOHN	DRURY	HOLTON CUM BECKERING
INV 170/65	1670	GEORGE	CLARKE	FRODINGHAM
INV 170/64	1670	ALEXANDER	CLARKE	EPWORTH
INV 172/221	1670	THOMAS	HALLE	TETNEY
INV 173/495	1671	GEORGE	JAXSON	BURTON UNDER LINCOLN
INV 173/588	1671	JARRIS	STEPHENSON	EASTOFT
INV 175/148	1671	WILLIAM	CLARKE	HUNDLEBY
INV 168/119	1671	SYMON	MAWE	EPWORTH
INV 175/454	1671	JOHN	WILKINSON	OWMBY
INV 175/301	1672	JOHN	COTTOM	NORTH WITHAM
INV 175/247	1672	HENRY	ANDREW	NAVENBY
INV 175/496	1672	ROBERT	ABNEY	HOWELL
INV 175/341	1672	THOMAS	BROOKE	BARNETBY
INV 175/233	1672	JOSEPH	DICKENSON	BILLINGHAY
INV 175/311	1672	JOHN	EASTERBY	HOLTON LE CLAY
INV 175/229	1672	JOHN	GOULDING	METHERINGHAM
INV 175/309	1672	SAMUEL	FIRNE	FRAMPTON
INV 175/84	1672	RICHARD	PARKIN	GEDNEY
INV 174/204	1673	ROBERT	STEPHENSON	WRANGLE
INV 176/123	1673	JAMES	BOLLEN	BROUGH
INV 174/39	1673	THOMAS	STEVENSON	GOXHILL
INV 175/10	1673	ROBERT	OTTER	LEAKE
INV 174/166	1673	ABRAME	GARNAR	CLAXBY

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 178/58	1674	ISIRIOLL	GEARING	BELTON
INV 176/167	1674	JOHN	JOHNSON	WEST KEAL
INV 176/146	1674	THOMAS	CROSSE	CHAPELHILL IN SWINESHEAD
INV 176/179	1674	JOSSUAH	POYNTELL	LEASINGHAM
INV 176/66	1674	ROBERT	NEWCOME	WADDINGTON
INV 174/116	1674	RICHARD	HESELDINE	HONINGTON
INV 176/188	1674	ROBERT	SIMPSON	NORTH SOMERCOTES
INV 176/69	1674	WILLIAM	FISHER	POTTERHANWORTH
INV 176/93	1675	JOHN	DAWSON	NORTH KYME
INV 178/116	1675	RICHARD	BULMER	CAMMERINGHAM
INV 178/88	1675	SAMUELL	COGGAN	EPWORTH
INV 177/125	1675	JOHN	JOHNSON	FRAMPTON
INV 176/130	1675	RALPH	HOBSTER	CANDLESBY
INV 179/194	1676	SAMUELL	PATTERSON	TATHWELL
INV 179/179	1676	WILLIAM	SOULDON	DONINGTON ON BAIN
INV 179/121	1676	JOHN	FOX	BUTTERWICK
INV 177/138	1676	DANELL	GOOD	METHERINGHAM
INV 179/215	1676	RICHARD	MARR	SCOPWICK
INV 178/120	1676	DANIELL	BELTON	AMCOTTS IN ALTHORPE
INV 179/186	1676	WILLIAM	RAWLAND	BOSTON
INV 179/327	1676	SIMION	ASHTON	ADDLETHORPE
INV 179/165	1677	WILLIAM	BARROW	EPWORTH
INV 180/557	1678	JOHN	CHEVINE	BUTTERWICK
INV 180/509	1678	AUGUSTINE	BOUGHAM	LEVERTON
INV 193/376	1678	THOMAS	OTTER	EPWORTH
INV 178/289	1678	JOHN	CRESSEY	STANTON IN WADDINGHAM
INV 180/157	1679	JOHN	WATSON	WAINFLEET ST MARY
INV 180/319	1679	JOHN	HOLT	HELPRINGHAM
INV 181/202	1679	WILLIAM	FEILDSEN	MARTON
INV 180/338	1679	SAMUELL	ELVIDGE	STANTON LE VALE
INV 178/426	1679	EDWARD	WHITEHEAD	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 178/215	1679	WILLIAM	KIMSON	MARTON
INV 181/187	1679	WILLIAM	DYKES	WALKERITH IN GAINSBOROUGH
INV 180/452	1679	ANTHONY	LAWIS	FREISTON
INV 178/285	1679	ROBERT	WELLES	BELTOFT IN BELTON
INV 178/210	1679	THOMAS	DUKE	HIBALDSTOW
INV 178/405	1680	ROBERT	BRUMBY	SCOTTER
INV 182/7	1680	JOHN	NELSON	GOXHILL
INV 178/424	1680	JOHN	YEATES	THORPE IN AYSTHORPE
INV 178/404	1680	STEPHEN	BARTLE	SCOTTER
INV 182/64	1680	GEORG	WALKER	EDENHAM
INV 182/61	1681	ROBERT	CAWTHOEPR	MARHAM LE FEN
INV 182/188	1681	JOHN	MILLNE	LONGER BENNINGTON
INV 182/193	1681	WILLIAM	STRATTRON	HECKINGTON
INV 182/228	1681	PHILLIP	BRIGHTY	HOLTON CUM BECKERING

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 182/215	1681	ROBART	PICKWORTH	LITTLE HALE
INV 182/32	1681	THOMAS	WILKINSON	RANBY
INV 182/362	1681	WILLIAM	BURNETT	PANTON
INV 182/169	1681	STEPHEN	PARKER	NORTH SOMERCOTES
INV 182/385	1681	ROBERT	HUNTER	KIRTON IN HOLLAND
INV 183/287	1682	WILLIAM	HARRISON	BURNHAM
INV 185/55	1682	JOHN	BURNHILL	GOXHILL
INV 183/351	1682	OTTLEWELL	WOOD	NETTLEHAM
INV 182A/55	1682	RALPH	NIXON	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 183/298	1682	WILLIAM	RAITHBURNE	GAINSBOROUGH
INV 182A/9	1682	RAFE	MARKEBEE	PANTON
INV 183/189	1683	JOHN	MAWER	WITHERN
INV 183/153	1683	JO	LOCKYE	UTTERBY
INV 185/16	1683	JOHN	PATCHET	BOSTON
INV 183/167	1683	EDWARD	PARKER	CONINGSBY
INV 183/390	1683	JOHN	WADLEY	HACKTHORN
INV 184/39	1683	ROGER	DIXON	CROWLE
INV 184/33	1683	JOHN	FARMERY	WILLINGHAM BY STOW
INV 183/335	1683	WILLIAM	HEALEY	ROXBY
INV 185/157	1684	DANILL	WITTON	BENINGTON
INV 186/106	1684	WILLIAM	TINKER	HAXEY
INV 184/72	1684	ROBERT	BANTTON	WHITTON
INV 185/155	1684	WILLIAM	MOMBY	HABROUGH
INV 185/66	1685	WILLIAM	MILLS	KILLINGHOLME/EAST HALTON
INV 186/272	1685	JOHN	NEWTON	GOSBERTON
INV 185A/191	1685	THOMAS	TAYLER	WAINFLEET ST MARY
INV 186/269	1685	ROBERT	BIRCH	SKIRBECK
INV 186/188	1685	WILLIAM	FISHER	BUTTERWICK
INV 186/224	1686	DAVID	PARKINGSON	WEST BUTTERWICK
INV 187/186	1687	JOHN	DENT	CHERRY WILLINGAHM
INV 188/102	1687	JOHN	OBREY	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 188/46	1688	WILLIAM	GREEN	ROTHWELL
INV 188/278	1688	JOSEPH	COOKE	HARPSWELL
INV 188/247	1688	JOHN	SKORTHORNE	LEA
INV 187/47	1688	RICHARD	PEARSALL	WRANGLE
INV 187/117	1688	FRANCIS	SIBSEY	SNITTERBY
INV 188/117	1689	ANTHONY	ADDISON	WIBERTON
INV 188/319	1690	THOMAS	TROLOVE	AISTHORPE
INV 189/154	1691	BARTOLEMEW	BARTILMEW	REEPHAM
INV 190/8	1692	RICHARD	TOYNE	LINCOLN
INV 190/42	1692	CHRISTOPHER	TORY	CROWLAND
INV 190/93	1692	ROBERN	ORSON	SURFLEET
INV 190/409	1693	ROBERT	DREWRY	WROOT
INV 191/77	1694	THOMAS	JOHNSON	EVERTHORPE
INV 190/425	1694	JOHN	STARKEY	EPWORTH
INV 191/280	1695	JOHN	MILSON	EAGLE

Reference	Year	Forename	Surname	Place of residence
INV 192/62	1695	THOMAS	PICKWORTH	LITTLE HALE
INV 191/296	1695	JOSEPH	LYON	OWMBY
INV 192/48	1695	GEORGE	PARKER	SWABY
INV 191/10	1695	THOMAS	HIRD	NORTH CARLTON
INV 192/268	1695	VINCENT	EASTON	BELTOFT IN BELTON
INV 191/37	1695	JAMES	BATTERLEY	BOSTON
INV 192/198 (3)	1695	HENRY	WOODLIFFE	BELTON
INV 192/311	1696	SAMUEL	BOLCOCK	GLENTHAM/CAENBY
INV 192/304	1696	ROBERT	BELDAM	NEWTON
INV 192/283	1696	JOHN	HARRIS	DONINGTON IN HOLLAND
INV 193/172	1697	JOHN	HOLLAM	OTTBY
INV 193/401	1698	WILLIAM	MASON	WELLINGORE
INV 193/299	1698	ANTHONY	BOWES	SWINESHEAD
INV 193/313	1698	JAMES	BENNETT	KIRKBY UNDERWOOD
INV 194/160	1699	GEORGE	COW	KETTLETHORPE
INV 194/258	1700	RICHARD	ROWSLEY	EAST LOUND, HAXEY
INV 194/43	1700	ANTHONY	WRIGHT	BOSTON

Appendix VIII

Names, dates and occupations (where known) of authors mentioned in the text.

(Source: Dictionary of National Biography, CD-Rom version 1.1, Oxford, 1998, unless otherwise stated).

Name (M = married)	Dates	Occupation
Agrippa H.C.	1486-1535	Magician (Source: R. Watt, <i>Bibliotheca Britannica, Volume I</i> , Edinburgh, 1824)
Allestree, Richard, D.D.	1619-1681	Royalist divine
Archer, John	fl. 1660-1684	Physician at the court of Charles II
Astell, Mary	1668-1731	Authoress
Bacon, Francis (M)	1561-1626	Lord Chancellor
Barker, Jane	1652-1727?	Poet and novelist
Barksdale, Clement	1609-1687	Author
Barrough, Philip	fl. 1590	Medical writer
Becon, Thomas, D.D. (M)	1512-1567	Protestant divine
Behn, Aphra (M)	1640-1689	Dramatist and novelist
Blaxton, J.	fl. 1634	“Preacher of God’s word” (Source: text)
Briscoe, John	fl. 1695	Economic writer (Source: <i>Early English Books 1641-1700</i> , Michigan 1990)
Brooks, Thomas (M)	1608-1680	Puritan divine
Bullinger, Heinrich	1504-1575	Swiss reformer (Source: Watt, <i>Bibliotheca Britannica</i>)
Cavendish, Margaret (M)	1624?-1674	Duchess of Newcastle, writer
Clarke, John	1596?-1658	Unknown (Source: <i>English Books</i>)
Cleaver, Richard	1561/2-1614?	Unknown (Source: <i>English Books</i>)
Cogan, Thomas (M)	1545?-1607	Physician

Name (M = married)	Dates	Occupation
Coke, Sir Edward (M)	1552-1634	Judge and law writer
Cotton, Charles (M)	1630-1687	Poet
Coventry, Sir William	1628?-1686	Politician
Culpeper, Nicholas (M)	1616-1654	Physician, medical/astrological writer
D'Avenant Charles, L.L.D. (M)	1656-1714	Political economist
Dalton, Michael (M)	d. 1648?	Author of two important legal works
Dekker, Thomas	1570?-1641?	Dramatist
Deloney, Thomas	1543?-1600	Ballad writer and pamphleteer
Denham, Sir John (M)	1615-1669	Poet
Dod, John (M)	1549?-1645	Puritan divine
Elderton, William	d. 1592?	Ballad writer
Erasmus, Desiderius	1467-1536	Humanist scholar (Source: Watt, <i>Bibliotheca Britannica</i>)
Fisher, Joseph	d. 1705	Archdeacon of Carlisle
Fontanus, Nicholas	fl. 1652	Pharmaceutical Institute of Bauderioni and Du Boys (Source: Watt, <i>Bibliotheca Britannica</i>)
Gataker, Thomas (M)	1574-1654	Puritan divine and critic
Gouge, William, D.D. (M)	1578-1653	Puritan divine
Graunt, John (M)	1620-1674	Haberdasher, statistician
Greene, Robert (M)	1560?-1592	Pamphleteer and dramatist
Griffith, Matthew (M)	1599?-1665	Royalist divine
Guazzo, S.	fl. 1574	Unknown (Source: Watt, <i>Bibliotheca Britannica</i>)
Halley, Edmund (M)	1656-1742	Astronomer
Harington, James (M)	1611-1677	Political theorist
Hering Francis, M.D.	d. 1628	Physician
Hilder, Thomas	fl. 1653	Unknown
Hodges, Thomas	d. 1688	Unknown (Source: <i>English Books</i>)

Name (M = married)	Dates	Occupation
King, Gregory (M)	1648-1712	Herald, engraver, genealogist, statistician
Kingsmill, Andrew	1538-1569	Puritan divine
Leminus, Levinus	1505-1568	Physician (Source: <i>English Books</i> and text)
Malthus, Thomas (M)	1766-1834	Political economist
Marsden (Marston), John (M)	1575?-1634	Dramatist and divine
Marten, John	fl. 1709	Surgeon (Source: F.J.G. Robinson, G. Averley, D.R. Esslemont and P.J. Wallis, <i>Eighteenth-Century British Books An Author Union Catalogue</i> , 1981)
McMath, James	fl. 1694	Scottish physician/obstetrician (Source: A. Eccles, <i>Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England</i> , 1982)
Middleton, Thomas (M)	1570?-1627	Dramatist
Milton, John (M)	1608-1674	Poet
More, Sir Thomas (M)	1478-1535	Lord Chancellor and author
Nash, Thomas	1588-1648	Author
Niccholes, Alexander	fl. 1615	Unknown
Osbourne, Francis (M)	1593-1659	Writer
Paré, Ambrose	1510?-1590	Surgeon to French royals (Source: <i>English Books</i>)
Pepys, Samuel (M)	1633-1703	Diarist
Perkins, William (M)	1558-1602	Theological writer, puritan sympathiser
Petty, Sir William (M)	1623-1687	Political economist
Philips, Katherine (M)	1631-1664	Verse-writer
Reynel, Carew (M)	1636-1690	Economic writer

Name (M = married)	Dates	Occupation
Riveruis, Lazarius (Rivière, Lazare)	1589-1655	French physician, professor at Montpellier University, Catholic (Source: <i>English Books</i> and text)
Rowlands, Samuel	1570?-1630?	Author of prose and verse
Savile, Sir George (M)	1633-1695	Marquis of Halifax
Shakespeare, William (M)	1564-1616	Dramatist and poet
Sharp, Jane	fl. 1671	Midwife (Source: J. Sharp, <i>The Midwives Book Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered</i> , ed. E. Hobby, Oxford, 1999).
Smith, Sir Thomas (M)	1513-1577	Statesman, scholar, author
Stockwood, John	d. 1610	Schoolmaster and divine
Stubbes, Philip (M)	fl. 1581-1593	Puritan pamphleteer (see 60, fn. 10)
Swetnam, Joseph	fl. 1617	"The woman hater"
Swinburne, Henry (M)	1560?-1623	Ecclesiastical lawyer
Tusser, Thomas (M)	1524?-1580	Agricultural writer, poet
Tyndale, William	d. 1536	English translator of the Bible
Vives, Johannes Ludovicus (M)	1491-1540	Spanish scholar
Walker, Clement (M)	d. 1651	Author of the "History of Independency"
Waller, Edmund (M)	1606-1687	Poet
Wharton, Henry	1664-1695	Divine and author
Whately, William (M)	1583-1639	Puritan divine
Wilkinson, Robert	fl. 1608	Preacher (Source: text)
Wilson, Thomas (M)	1525?-1581	Secretary of state and scholar
Woodhead, Abraham	1609-1867	Roman Catholic controversialist

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Ealing, 1599 (See below - K.J. Allison).

Eccleshall, Staffordshire, 1693/1698.

Firbanke, Westmoreland, 1695.

Goodnestone, Kent, 1676.

Harefield, Middlesex, 1699.

Lichfield, Staffordshire, 1695.

Melbourne, Derbyshire, 1695 (See below - R.E.C. Waters).

New Romney, Kent, 1696, 1697, 1698.

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