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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze advice about marriage written in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first chapter focuses on marital counsel contained in letters, the second on advice offered by Protestant clergymen, and the third on various kinds of popular literature which discussed marriage and women. The contents of the works are described, as is the historical and literary context in which they were written.

Although the form, purpose, and significance of the marital counsel varies, the advice itself is remarkably consistent. The central concern of the authors is how a man can select a good wife and how the woman should comport herself after marriage; only the works written by clerics describe the husband's marital responsibilities to any significant extent. The implication is that a successful marriage would result if the man chose his wife wisely and if, once chosen, the woman conformed to his and society's expectations.

However, advice tells us only what people were saying, not what they were doing; it is prescriptive, not descriptive. Moreover, when examining works which dealt with wedlock, one becomes aware of the essentially literary nature of much of the counsel--many authors simply repeated or expanded on cliches. Their words do not provide us with insight into their own thoughts or matrimonial relations, but inform us as to the accepted, conventional mode of discussing marriage during this period.
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INTRODUCTION

The Early Modern Era was a didactic age in England: works of advice on everything from animal-husbandry to education to personal salvation proliferated. In such a complex time, the reasons for this phenomenon were undoubtedly complex: transformations in the political, social, religious, and economic realms may have engendered an insecure populace who sought confirmation of their newly-emerging values; the rise in literacy and the explosion of the publishing industry gave many access to books which they may have hoped would help them improve their lot; or, the printing industry itself may have created a vogue for advisory literature.

Many works of this type contained counsel on marriage. Historians have suggested that this concern with matrimony was unique to Protestant countries, that the new faith placed greater emphasis on conjugal relations and domestic life than had the old, and that the English were particularly absorbed in this subject.

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze advice concerning marriage which was written in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although literary evidence of this kind has often been used by social historians to illustrate values and attitudes, it has been employed in a random fashion and has not been systematically studied or categorized. Most historians simply cite a few of the better-known examples of this type of writing without studying
significant numbers or attempting to evaluate individual works within their own context.

This work will survey different kinds of sources which contained marital counsel, specifically letters of advice, marriage manuals, and several genres of literature which discussed women and marriage, in order not only to determine the contents of such works, but to place them in a historical and literary context.
CHAPTER I
LETTERS OF ADVICE

When it shall please God to bring thee to man's estate, use great providence and circumspection in the choice of thy wife, for from thence may spring all thy future good or ill; and it is an action like a stratagem in war where man can err but once.

Lord Burghley

Letters of advice from age to youth, fairly rare in England during the sixteenth century, became, with the rise in literacy and the expansion of the publishing trade, increasingly common in the seventeenth. Usually written by a father to his son, these epistles contained counsel on a variety of topics: education, religion, finances, deportment, politics, and personal relations, the most important of which was, of course, marriage. While these letters are a valuable resource in ascertaining assumptions and values about matrimony, the scholar must be wary of taking what is only a very small part of the picture for the whole. Advice about marriage existed in many forms; letters are simply one among the many, not necessarily more significant or representative. To assume that "Contemporary attitudes about the purposes of marriage are best revealed in the 'Letter of advice to a son'" is to overlook the limitations of literary sources such as these.

The letters described in this chapter differ in kind: some appear to have been written for a specific
individual which were subsequently published, and others are works which use the form of a private letter, but were obviously intended for wider circulation. Thus, the authors' intentions differed and comparison of the works is difficult. Secondly, many of the individuals whose letters have come down to us were exceptional; to assume that their attitudes were typical when their lives were not, is contradictory. That a specific work was popular does not necessarily mean that those who read it shared the writer's opinions. Readers may have studied the works of the famous out of curiosity or to gain insight into the authors' characters. Moreover, since the advisors were affecting a parental role, the letters indicate only what age thought it fit to say to youth. To assume that these sources describe what men sought in marriage is to miss the point; they tell only what old men thought young men should seek. Finally, the majority of these letters were written by men of the gentry or nobility for youths of the same classes; what are expressed are the views of an elite, masculine minority.

Sixteenth century examples of marital advice in epistolary form are few. One of the most charming and original came from the pen of Sir Thomas More who, in Latin verse, counselled a friend on the qualities to look for in a wife. He cautioned against wedding for money or beauty, both of which would lead to disillusionment, and advised (somewhat surprisingly since some historians would have us believe that it played no part in
the marriages of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries)\(^3\) to marry for love. Specifically, he instructed his correspondent to observe his intended's parents, especially the mother, to find out about her character, and also to evaluate the maid's own personality, making sure she was calm, modest, and mild-mannered. More's advice differed from other counsel and reflected his Humanist values in that he strongly advocated marrying an educated woman. "Happy is the woman whose education permits her to derive from the best of ancient works the principles which confer a blessing on life," he wrote. "Armed with this learning, she would not yield to pride in prosperity, nor to grief in distress."\(^4\) She would be able to teach children and her intelligent conversation would be a comfort and joy to her husband.

The importance of love in marriage was also emphasized by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Thomas Howard, fourth Duke of Norfolk. Moreover, although the poet spoke of the husband 'ruling' his wife and household, his words imply a more equitable relationship than is usually thought to have existed between spouses during the period:

> Love well, and agree with your wife; for where is noise and debate in the house there is unquiet dwelling; and much more, where it is in one bed. Frame well yourself to love and rule well and honestly your wife as your fellow, and she shall love and reverence you as her head. Such as you are unto her, such shall she be unto you.\(^5\)

Norfolk's is one of the many 'prison' letters referred to in this chapter.\(^6\) Although it seems to have been a common
practice for those awaiting execution to write a final letter of advice to their children, the epistles themselves vary greatly in tone and content. The Duke's was extremely personal; he referred to each of his children individually and obviously intended it for their eyes alone. His eldest son, already married, was advised to love and cherish his wife, for her strength and resolve would be a great comfort in the troubled times ahead. "Where love is not between the husband and the wife," wrote the prisoner, "there God doth not prosper."7

Writing to his second son, who would become a ward of the Court upon his father's execution, the Duke expressed the hope that he would be able to buy his own wardship (which would allow him to make his own match) and would marry the heiress Mary Dacres. However, the father did not urge his son to go against his own inclination, but merely pointed out the advantage of having a wealthy bride:

I will not advise you otherways than yourself when you are of fit years shall think good, but this assure yourself, it will be good augmentation to your small living, considering how changeable the world groweth to be.8

More, Wyatt, and Norfolk expressed positive views about women and marriage; Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, on the other hand, despised women and detested matrimony. The first part of his lengthy epistle to his son was composed in 1595 or 1596, the second in 1609 when the author was imprisoned for his involvement in the Gunpowder Plot.9 The Earl's major
concern was that his son not allow his wife to impoverish the estate. "Never," he wrote, "suffer your wife to have power in the manage of your affairs." What followed was a bitter diatribe against women in general and his own wife in particular. Although warning of the tedium and aggravation of marriage, Northumberland obviously did not consider the single life a viable alternative to one of his son's status, but advised him to marry a woman fair in mind and body who could be maintained at her own expense and had eminent connections which would benefit husband and children. The efficacy of these instructions must have seemed questionable to the heir, since this was precisely the path the Earl himself had taken with disastrous results. Northumberland reiterated that his son allow his wife no say in financial affairs since women were, by nature, lazy, deceitful, sly spendthrifts.

Personal letters such as these would have had an impact only on the recipient and, perhaps, a small circle of friends. An advisory epistle by Lord Burghley to his son Robert Cecil, however, may have been intended from the first for a larger audience. Thought to be composed in 1586, it was circulated widely in manuscript form before it was published in 1617 under the title Certaine precepts or directions for the well ordering of a man's life. Later editions were issued in 1618, 1636, and 1637.

Worldly and cynical as most of Burghley's advice was, his counsel on marriage was fairly pedestrian. Matrimony was of
paramount importance, he told his son, for from the choice of a wife would spring "all thy future good or ill; and it is an action like a stratagem in war where man can err but once." Robert was advised not to sacrifice wealth for gentility, but neither to wed a "base and uncomely creature altogether for wealth." He was to inquire into the disposition of the prospective bride and assess the character of her family.

Burghley's Precepts was an influential work; not only did other writers imitate or refer to it, some lifted it in its entirety and claimed it as their own. This indicates a change in the nature of advice-giving: what formerly had been a private, personal exchange was becoming a public, conventional one. More letters of advice were published; even those which were not, reflected the influence of printed works and contained little original counsel. It seems to have become traditional for gentlemen to offer 'words of wisdom' to youths. The letter of advice was evolving into a literary genre, an evolution facilitated by the popularity of the letters of Burghley and Sir Henry Sidney and especially The Basilikon Doron of King James.

The Basilikon Doron, addressed to the King's heir Prince Henry, was composed in 1598. Supposedly, the work was not intended for publication, but in 1599 seven copies were printed and given to trusted servants. False copies were circulated, so James allowed his treatise to be made public in 1603. This may well be true; however, many authors of this time adopted a similar 'reluctant' pose. Whatever the case, the
King's consent to the publication came at an opportune time. Six editions were published in the year of James' accession, two the following year. The popularity of the work was probably due as much to the curiosity which the English felt about their new monarch as to its intrinsic merits.

The King's book resembled the medieval looking-glass for princes and contained a portrait of a virtuous ruler, counsel about governing, and descriptions of appropriate leisure pursuits, as well as advice about marriage. A godly and virtuous wife, James wrote, was one of life's chief blessings, "for she must be nearer unto you, than any other company, being flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone." He admonished his son to keep himself "clean and unpolluted" before marriage and dwelt, at considerable length, on the evils of fornication. James' reasons for this stance were religious and practical: to obey God's commandment and to forestall disasters similar to those which had befallen his grandfather in punishment for his inconstancy. Marriage was ordained for three purposes: the "staying of lust,...[the] procreation of children, and that man should by his wife get a helper like himself." Therefore, a man should marry young to quench the lust of youth and should, as far as possible, ascertain that his bride was capable of bearing children.

James described three assets of a wife which, although not the principal reasons to wed, would help ensure a happy union: beauty, riches, and powerful alliances. The first would increase a husband's love, and the others ensure that the
prince's wife be a help to him. The king wished his son to marry within his religion, although he recognized the difficulty in this, since few monarchs at the time were Protestant. He also advocated marrying one of high rank, and, in what seemed an obvious caution but one seldom stated, that the prospective bride not be susceptible to hereditary illnesses, either physical or mental:

That she [should] be of a whole and clean race, not subject to the hereditary sicknesses, whether of the soul or the body. For if a man will be careful to breed horses and dogs of good kinds; how much more careful should he be, for the breed of his own loins?

The King's advice about marriage also included ideas about the husband's duties. Referring to the Scriptures, he reminded his son that it was the man's part to command, the woman's to obey in all things. Specifically, he cautioned against allowing women to meddle in politics and advised his son to choose his wife's companions carefully. And finally, he admonished that husband and wife should never be angry at the same time, but the man should control his passion until reason and good sense returned.

Many subsequently published books of advice reflected the tone and ideas of The Basilikon Doron. W. Lee Ustick found direct quotations or paraphrases from the King's book in fifteen seventeenth-century books which described the ideals of the gentleman. Two works directly based on The Basilikon were A prince's looking glasse (1603) and The fathers blessing (1616). The former contained excerpts translated into Latin and
English verse. The author faithfully transcribed the ideas of the original, yet, because of the doggerel verse, A princes looking glasse loses the seriousness of James' work and appears, to a modern reader at least, rather comic. On pre-marital chastity, the author wrote:

To marriage that you may prepare aright,  
From fleshly lusts abstain with all your might,  
Your body let no whoredom foul deflower,  
Until your loving wife thereof have power,  
All burning lusts warely you must expel  
And chastity see that therein do dwell.  

The full title of the latter work was The father's blessing: or second councell to his sonne; appropriated to the generall from that perticular example His Majestie composed for the Prince his son. Although Pollard and Redgrave attribute it to James, it appears, to this reader, to have come from the pen of some minor hack and bears little relation to The Basilikon Doron. On the choice of a wife, the author stated the commonplace idea that marriage was of the highest consequence and that a wife may be either a curse or a blessing. He recommended prayer to ensure the latter. He advocated youthful marriages and, in an excess of simplicity, counselled a husband, "That thou mayest be loved, be amiable."  

While King James had indicated that riches were desirable in a wife, he had obviously not been overly concerned with the economic aspect of matrimony. Other counsellors were more practical and emphasized that marriage must be based on sound financial arrangements. At this time, the marriage settlement
or dowry which the bride's father paid to the groom's father or, in some cases, directly to the groom, was commonly called her 'portion'. In return, she received her keep and the promise of a 'jointure' or pension to be paid annually should her husband predecease her.\textsuperscript{31} A large bridal portion could make a great difference to the fortunes of a family; however if they were obliged to pay out a sizeable jointure, it could mean ruin. While few advisors advocated marrying solely for money, almost all of them believed that it was folly to marry without adequate means.\textsuperscript{32}

In a long letter of advice to his son Thomas, the future Earl of Strafford, Sir William Wentworth discussed religion, personal relationships, the management of an estate, and marriage. The focus of the marital counsel was almost entirely fiscal. The qualities the father recommended in a bride were few: "let her be well born and brought up but not too highly,\textsuperscript{33} of a healthful body, of a good complexion, humble and virtuous, some few years younger than yourself and not of simple wit."\textsuperscript{34} Wentworth then proceeded to give very specific counsel concerning the bride's jointure. His concerns were that, should Thomas predecease his wife, the heirs would be impoverished if the widow's jointure was too large, and that a second husband would enjoy unearned benefits.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, he advised that the bride be promised only a small pension which could be increased after several children were born, but which would cease should she remarry.

Similarly, the marital counsel of Sir William Higford was
included with general financial advice. He was blunt as to the purpose of matrimony: "...an especial means to preserve your estate is your choice of a wife...which...by your care, will add unto you both an increment of estate, and strength, and alliance of friends." 36 A letter of advice concerning marriage (1676), addressed specifically to the gentry, gave different advice depending on the condition of a man's estate. Anyone in financial difficulty was counselled not to marry at all, or to marry a fortune; however, the author warned that "there is no villainage to the apron-tenure," 37 and that bringing wealth to a marriage would make the bride arrogant and disobedient. If a man possessed an adequate and unencumbered estate, he could afford to seek other qualities in a wife: "lovely feature and shape, graceful motion, sound constitution, gayety of humour, quickness of wit, discreet behaviour, approved housewifery." 38

Wealth was, in the view of many counsellors, only one of the desirable qualities to be sought in a wife. Archibald Campbell, eighth Earl and first Marquis of Argyle, advised his son to marry his equal in years and rank, one who possessed virtue, beauty, and riches. 39 John Norden wrote:

Let thy wife be either virtuous, noble, rich, or fair, for without these or one of these, there can be no love. Nobility and riches may be a means to advance posterity, virtue and beauty will add to thy self pleasure and content, but never marry for beauty only, lest time or fickleness show thee thy folly. 40

While some of the letters stressed the importance of the financial aspect of matrimony, others emphasized, as had...
Basilikon Doron, the necessity of religious compatibility between spouses. Quaker William Penn was insistent that his children marry within the sect. Sir John Strode wrote, "Be advised by thy wisest friends and take a wife of the same religion and faith which thou professeth." He advocated marrying a younger woman, not too beautiful, whose portion would provide for her expenses. After marriage, the husband was to be "ever faithful and loving...patient...and mild, not taking offence at every unkind word, nor returning distasteful answers upon any light occasion." William Tipping counselled:

Now when you have consulted God, be industriously inquisitive into the disposition, inclination, stock, but especially the religion of the party commended to your choice....Religion is the sweetest and strongest tie and those that are so conjoined, nothing but death, nay, in truth, neither life nor death can part them.  

Two extremely popular works which expressed very cynical views of marriage were Sir Walter Raleigh's "Instructions to His Son and To Posterity" and Francis Osborne's "Advice to a Son". Raleigh's "Instructions" were written sometime between 1603 and 1617 while he was in the Tower awaiting execution (along with Northumberland). Although obviously intended for public consumption, they were not published until 1632. The work was reprinted five times within the next four years, its popularity due, no doubt, as much to interest in the author himself as in its worldly, bitter contents.

Raleigh advised his son that if he was bewitched by a
great beauty, he should make her, not his wife, but his mistress:

Though thou canst not forbear to love, yet forbear to link, and after a while thou shalt find an alteration in thyself, and see another far more pleasing than the first, second, or third love.

He did not directly advocate marrying for money, but made the point that either husband or wife must have a great estate, for love would not last if the income were small. He wished his son "beloved of thy wife rather than besotted on her." According to the knight, thirty was the perfect age for matrimony; before that a man was not fit to govern a wife. However, if he waited too long, he would probably not live to see his children grow up and would undoubtedly be betrayed by his young bride. Moreover, he would have spent the prime of his life with harlots, destroyed his health, impoverished his estate, and endangered his life. Whether the son's life would be threatened by disease or by jealous husbands and lovers is not clear.

Francis Osborne's "Advice to a Son" was first published at Oxford in 1656 and within two years had passed through six editions. Pepys noted that it was one of the three most popular works of the day. Osborne's advice, cynical and pessimistic, was full of bitter observations of the treachery and duplicity of the world. The treatise was divided into sections on studies, travel, government, and religion, but the section on love and marriage revealed Osborne at his most acrimonious.
The author began his tirade against matrimony and the female sex with a condemnation of love which was, in his opinion, just a prettified word for lust; it deprived man of reason and caused "madness in some, folly in all." Should his son be so smitten, his father advised making the woman his mistress rather than his wife, for his desire for her would soon be satiated. Marriage, on the other hand, would undoubtedly lead to perpetual misery and disillusionment.

The only possible excuse for marriage, in Osborne's view, was to acquire a great estate:

Therefore the yoke of marriage had need be lined with the richest stuff, and softest outward conveniences, else it will gall your neck and heart, so, as you shall take little comfort in the virtue, beauty, birth, etc. of her to whom you are coupled.

The author cautioned against marrying a beauty,

Unless you are ambitious of rendering your house as populous as a confectioner's shop to which the gaudy wasps, no less than the liquorish flies, make it their business to resort, in hope of obtaining a lick at your honey-pot.

Such a wife would, without doubt, cuckold her husband and make him ridiculous in the eyes of the world.

Osborne's work was one of the very few which referred to sexual matters; his belief that females had stronger desires than males was shared by Thomas, fourth Baron Fairfax, author of Advice to a young lord (1691). He cautioned that "a man ought to approach his wife in fear, lest too wantonly provoking her desires, the pleasure thereof make her exceed the bounds of
reason," and added that "too hot and too frequent an iteration of that pleasure hinders generation."

John Evelyn's instructions to his newly married son regarding sex were even more detailed. In a private letter he advised "temperance" and "moderation" in sexual relations so that the husband's health would not be impaired and so that the bride would not have unrealistic expectations:

Be none of those who brag how frequently they can be brutes in one night, for that intemperance will exhaust you, and possible create importunate expectations, when your inclinations are not so fierce.

Moreover, coitus was forbidden during the wife's menstrual period, during the day-time, on a full stomach, and in excessively hot or cold weather. The father warned, "Too much frequency of embraces dulls the sight, decays the memory, induces the gout, palsies, enervates and renders effeminate the whole body and shortens life." He concluded, however, that he realized that the young couple would probably ignore his admonitions. Although Evelyn's warnings were extreme, both medical and clerical advisors seem to have countenanced only a 'moderate' degree of sexual activity in marriage.

An indication of the popularity of the advice-giving genre and a sign that it was becoming an increasingly literary form of expression was the publication of works of fiction written in the style of letters of advice. Two such works were Josiah Dare's Counsellor Manners, his last legacy to his son (1673)
which was printed three times before the end of the century and Caleb Trenchfield's *A cap of gray hairs* (1671) which went through five editions. In Dare's work the Counsellor sternly warned against the sins of the flesh and advised avoiding the company of handsome women. He was not enthusiastic about the married state, but reluctantly agreed with St. Paul that it was better to marry than to burn. "Be sure," he added, "to choose a wife as may bring with her such advantages to thee, as may at least counter-balance all the inconveniences of married life."  

In choosing a wife, the four 'P's' were to be considered: piety, parentage, proportion, and portion. Manners' definition of piety, however, referred not as much to religious observance as to having a modest, unsophisticated character; indeed, he wished his son to avoid those who were too "precise" about religion and would "nibble thine estate worse than the rats will thy...cheese, by stealing out of it large contributions to the Bartholomew Martyrs." The bride was to come from a good and honest family. By proportion, the Counsellor meant appearance, and advocated marrying a woman who was physically attractive, since "love ever first enters in at the eye, and to keep it warm and alive, it is fit that member should be pleased." Although portion was mentioned last, it was of paramount importance, since without an adequate estate, all else was meaningless.

From the type of domestic advice it contained, it is apparent that Dare's work was aimed at the middle classes; Trenchfield's book, the full title of which was *A cap of gray*
hairs for a green head, or The fathers counsel to his son, an apprentice in London, was addressed to those of an even lower order. Interestingly, the qualities desired in a wife were, with the exception of a strong emphasis on good health, almost identical to those mentioned in the other works: good reputation and character, beauty, piety, and wealth, not necessarily in that order. Beauty was important because, not only did it please in itself, but a fair woman would be more likely to have fair daughters who would be easy to marry off. Good health was necessary so that the wife would not pass on hereditary deformities or diseases, but also because living with a sickly woman was tiresome and expensive. The bride's portion was crucial, since "a fair wife without a portion is like a brave house without furniture, where a man may please himself with the prospect, but there is nothing within to keep him warm." The recipient of the advice was reminded that he could raise his status by marrying a woman with wealth or powerful friends.

Trenchfield also gave directions for governing the wife. In a cynical vein, he advocated promoting the woman's piety, not for spiritual reasons, but for expediency - a pious wife would be better behaved and more tractable. He recommended kindly treatment so that she would obey her husband willingly, rather than grudgingly:

For whatever is compelled, waits for an opportunity to be denied; and they that rule over the unwilling, find the trouble as great to keep in obedience, as the pleasure to be obeyed.
Rather startlingly, Trenchfield advised that husband and wife should share in financial decisions: "The bed and the purse being two thing, wherein a mutual sharing breeds kindness and confidence." 66

One of the most fascinating letters of advice is The Lady's New Year's Gift; or Advice to a Daughter 67 written in 1688 by Lord Halifax to his fifteen year-old daughter Elizabeth. 68 It is unusual, not simply because so few examples of advisory letters to girls or women survive, 69 but also because the sensitivity and acumen of the author are revealed in the prose as is the personal affection which he felt for his child. The work became extremely popular when it first appeared and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, had been reprinted over a dozen times.

Halifax obviously respected his daughter and valued her talents, yet, his teachings on marriage are so cynical and bleak that they make one doubt even the possibility of happiness for a woman in the upper reaches of late seventeenth-century society. Referring to this work, Ada Wallas noted,

But the strange thing about this book is that on the subject of marriage, on which his fears and desire to help are obviously greatest, Lord Halifax had nothing to say which is enlightened, and much which is simply poisonous. 70

Halifax explicitly stated the conditions under which women of the day were married:
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. In this case there remaineth nothing for them to do but to endeavour to make that easy which falleth to their lot, and by wise use of everything they may dislike in a husband, turn that by degrees to be very supportable, which, if neglected, might in time beget an aversion.71

The father proceeded to explain to his daughter how to make the best of a bad bargain, how to turn her husband's weaknesses to her advantage. Should her husband prove chronically unfaithful, she should not complain, indeed should pretend ignorance; her patience in this would make him yield to her in other things. Should he prove a drunkard, he would be less critical of his wife's failings; also, she had an opportunity for greater power and control within her household if he was continually besotted. A bad-tempered husband should be flattered and cajoled, his rage directed elsewhere. An avaricious, close-fisted man should be plied with wine to make him more generous. And, should Elizabeth be matched with a fool, she could console herself with the knowledge that, in comparison with her spouse, she would appear more worthy in the eyes of the world. Moreover, if he was a dolt, she could rule him as she willed: "Therefore be sure, if you have such an idiot, that none, except yourself, may have the benefit of the forfeiture....When your husband shall resolve to be an
ass...take care he may be your ass." Halifax concluded that Elizabeth was, of course, to pray for a kind and wise husband; after his catalogue of brutes, she probably didn't hold out much hope.

The idea that marriage was of great consequence was reiterated throughout the letters of advice; yet they were almost exclusively concerned with the issue of choice of the bride. There was little discussion of what happened after the choice was made; those who described the duties of husband and wife did so in a cursory manner. The assumption seemed to be that a happy and successful marriage depended almost entirely upon the man making the proper selection.

The issues which the counsellors considered in selecting the bride were family, religion, finances, and personal characteristics. For the most part, the woman's family was important only in that they be respectable and of approximately the same social standing as the man's. Little mention was made of allying with powerful houses in order to extend one's influence.

On the religious issue, the advice was divided. Many did not mention it at all or did so in a perfunctory way. However, those who did, discussed it at length and usually made religious agreement between spouses a high priority. To those with strong convictions it was a crucial matter; to those with few, it was not particularly relevant.

While few advisors advocated marrying only for money, most
agreed that it was an important consideration. The size of the bride's marriage portion made a marked difference to the family's future and only the very rich or very poor could afford to ignore the financial side of a match. The extensive discussion on this aspect of marriage did not necessarily reflect a mercenary attitude as much as a recognition of the realities of the time. Many of the fathers wished their sons to be well-off, but not at the price of personal happiness. However, there was a difference in the emphasis placed on wealth, and, generally, the more negative the advisor's view of matrimony and women, the higher the premium he placed on marrying for gain.

Concerning the personal qualities of the bride, her character and appearance received the most attention. In view of the fact that bearing children was one of the prime functions of a wife, surprisingly little mention was made of her health or possible fertility. With the exception of More, none of the letter writers seemed to have even remotely considered the possibility that education or intelligence in a wife could be an asset. On the issue of beauty they were, as has been noted, divided: some considered it a positive factor in that it would increase the husband's love for his wife; others thought that, as a beautiful woman would be inclined to pride, disobedience, and adultery, the disadvantages outweighed the advantages. Although most of the advisors stressed that the woman's character was an important consideration, they were usually vague as to what constituted good character in a
female. Beyond the general and rather fuzzy notion of 'virtue', few specifics were given.

The idea that sexual attraction should exist between potential marriage partners was not mentioned or even hinted at in any of the letters of advice. Indeed, sexual activity, both in and out of marriage, was viewed in rather a negative light; fornication and adultery were sternly condemned and married relations were to be 'temperate'. Even those cynics who advocated taking a mistress viewed it as a remedy to cure infatuation. Of course, it must be remembered that these are the letters of old men to young, and reflect the views of the writers, not necessarily the recipients.

Opinions about love in marriage were diverse. Few were as straightforward as Thomas More or William Penn who directly advocated marrying for love. On the other extreme were the skeptics who denied even the possibility of love between husband and wife. Generally, however, most of the advisors seemed to believe that love would come after the wedding, had a wise choice been made.

The emphasis on the choice of a bride indicates that, in theory, the fathers or father-figures who wrote the letters granted youths the right to make their own matches. Presumably, the counsellors would not have expended so much ink in describing how to make the correct selection if marriages were arranged by families and friends. In light of the implications implicit in these letters concerning the man's freedom of choice of a marriage partner, historians may have to
modify their views on the prevalence of arranged marriages and entertain the idea that young men of the elite class had a greater role in selecting their spouses than has been previously thought.

However, theory and practice often bear little relation to each other and advice is not direct evidence. During this period, the advisory letter evolved into a literary genre; counsellors assumed a traditional pose - wise age counselling inexperienced youth. The advice they gave, which became more and more conventional, may have had little or nothing to do with what they actually believed or what they actually did. Indeed, if one examines specific cases, one suspects that, for many of the letter-writers, advice-giving was nothing more than a literary exercise. From what is known about the political considerations involved in royal marriages, for example, it is difficult to believe that Prince Henry would have had very much to say about whom he wed. Or that Lord Burghley, who arranged the marriages of his wards to his own financial advantage, would have allowed Robert, for whom he had such high ambitions, to choose his own bride. Or that the many who simply repeated the words of others when giving advice were doing anything other than mouthing conventional platitudes, platitudes which in some ways, did not differ greatly from the marital advice offered by the clergy or popular writers.
NOTES


2 Stone, Crisis, 612.


6 Norfolk was imprisoned for his complicity in the Ridolfi Plot and was executed in 1572. Others who wrote letters of advice from prison were Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland; Sir Walter Raleigh; Archibald Campbell, eighth Earl and first Marquis of Argyle; and James Stanley, seventh Earl of Derby.


8 Ibid., 243. This son did, in fact, marry the specified heiress.

9 The Earl was imprisoned in the Tower from 1606 until 1621 when he was released. He died on November 5, 1632.


11 Ibid., 94.

12 Northumberland had made a political marriage to Dorothy Devereux, sister of the Earl of Essex who was the Queen's favourite at the time. The two earls quarrelled and Dorothy, who had a strong personality and a bitter tongue, sided with her brother. G.B. Harrison, the editor of Northumberland's letters, notes, "Relations between the two were a perpetual joke to the Court." Ibid., 13.
Northumberland's misogynist ideas and cynical view of matrimony apparently had little effect on his son Algernon. In 1628, he secretly contracted a love match with Lady Anne Cecil, the grand-daughter of his father's bitterest enemy. Northumberland's enraged response to the engagement is described by Antonia Fraser in *The Weaker Vessel* (London: Methuen, 1984), 28-9.

Most scholars accept that this work was, in fact, composed by Burghley. See, for example, the introduction of *Advice to a Son* edited by Louis B. Wright and Ustick's article. Jacob Zeitlin, on the other hand, argues that the style and contents are at odds with other known letters of Burghley. See "Commonplaces in Elizabethan Life and Letters," *The Journal of English and German Philology* 19 (1920): 47-65.

The titles of works cited in this paper are spelled as they appear in *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1475-1640* compiled by A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave and *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British America, 1641-1700* compiled by Donald Wing; the spelling in quotations has been modernized.


Ibid., 10. Robert was also instructed not to marry a dwarf lest he beget a race of pygmies, advice not, perhaps, as fatuous as it seems, since Robert suffered from a crooked spine and was extremely short.

Ibid., 11.

In 1612, Sir John Oglander wrote *Instructions for my son George* which is almost identical to Burghley's work. This confirms that the *Precepts* was in circulation before it was published. Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, *Nunwell Symphony* (London: Hogarth Press, 1945), 47-49. Years later, Lord Derby also copied the *Precepts*. "Lord Derby's Second Letter to His Son Charles Lord Strange," *Remains Historical and Literary Connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester* (Chetham Society, 1887), vol. 70, 42-47.

Copies of Sir Henry Sidney's letter of advice to young Philip were circulated after the poet's death had made him a national hero.

See Mason, *Gentlefolk*, 32.

W. Lee Ustick maintained that James' parental advice was unique in its advocacy of male chastity before marriage: "But male chastity before marriage seems hardly to have been thought of save as a measure of safety, or perhaps by a few emasculated Puritans who are as widely removed as possible from the polite tradition." W. Lee Ustick, "Advice," 412. However, Ustick overstated the case. Many authors warned of the dangers of lust and specifically advised single men to be chaste. See, for instance, William Martyn, Youths instruction (1612), 57-59; Anthony Stafford, The guide of honour (1634), 33-39; Richard Lingard, A letter of advice to a young gentleman leaving the university (1670), 21-23; and A letter of advice to a young gentleman (1688), 41-43.

The Elizabethan Prayer Book of 1559 mentioned procreation first and avoidance of fornication second. For a discussion of different views on the purposes of marriage, see Chapter Two of this paper.

The question of whether or not a man should marry a beautiful woman was a contentious one. Some advisors, such as Archibald Campbell and John Norden viewed beauty in a wife positively; others such as More, Wentworth, Osborne, and Raleigh, thought it a snare which would blind a man to a woman's true nature and, ultimately, cease to please. Also, a beautiful wife would likely cuckold her husband. Archibald Campbell, eighth Earl and first Marquis of Argyle, Instructions to a son, 3rd ed. (1689), 40; John Norden, The Fathers legacie (1625), sig. A6; More, Works, vol. 3, 183; Sir William Wentworth, "Advice to his Son," Wentworth Papers, 1597-1628 Camden Fourth Series, vol. 12 (1973), 22; Francis Osborne, "Advice to a Son," The Works of Francis Osborne, 7th ed. (1673), 36-38; Sir Walter Raleigh, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Instructions to His Son and to Posterity," The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh (Oxford: The University Press, 1829), vol. 8, 559.

James clearly saw the dangers involved in a 'mixed' marriage: "...consider upon these doubts how you and your wife can be of one flesh and keep unity betwixt you, being members of two opposite churches; disagreement in religion bringeth ever with it, disagreement in manners; and the dissension betwixt your preachers and hers, will breed and foster a dissension among your subjects, taking their example from your family; besides the peril of evil education of your children." King James, Basilicon, 131. On this topic, James spoke from experience: his wife, Queen Anne, was hostile toward Calvinism and rumoured to be a secret Catholic. Moreover, his words foreshadow the dissension created by the open Catholicism of Henrietta-Maria.

King James, Basilicon, 129.
Ibid., 135.
Ustick, "Advice," 410.

30 James I, *The fathers blessing: or second counsell to his sonne; appropriated to the generall from that particular example His Majestie composed for the Prince his son*, (1616), 29.


32 Argyle described money as "the sinew of love...you can do nothing happily in wedlock without it." Argyle, *Instructions*, 40.

33 Several counsellors warned against marrying a wife of higher status for fear she would be arrogant and disobedient. See, for instance, Osborne, *Advice*, 45.


35 The fear that a second husband, a 'stranger', would gain financially after the first husband's death was commonly expressed. See, for example, Raleigh, "Instructions," 560.


38 Ibid., 1.

39 Argyle, *Instructions*, 43-47. Argyle composed this letter in 1661 when he was imprisoned in Edinburgh for his role in the regicide.


42 Miriam Slater discusses the way in which the word 'friend' was used at this time: "In the usage of the period, the word 'friend' meant something quite different from what it usually does today. In the correspondence, 'friend' is repeatedly and almost exclusively used to refer to someone who can be helpful in advancing one's career or prospects, and is never used to describe someone freely chosen on the basis of
mutual psychological attraction. A friend was a person who was important to one's interests; he was not necessarily likeable or personally attractive, though he was often related by blood or marriage." Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 35-36.


44 Ibid.


46 Raleigh, "Instructions," 559.

47 Ibid., 561.

48 Francis Osborne was the uncle of Dorothy Osborne whose love letters to Sir William Temple provide a dramatic contrast to her uncle's treatise.


50 Osborne, "Advice," 33.

51 Ibid., 44.

52 Ibid., 36.

53 Osborne's misogynist viewpoint was attacked by John Heydon in *Advice to a daughter* (1658), an unoriginal panegyric to the beauty, character, and virtue of womankind. Heydon was himself reviled in Thomas Pecke's *Advice to Balaam's ass* (1658). Both works only served to heighten interest in Osborne's book.

54 Osborne, "Advice," 38.

55 Thomas Fairfax, fourth Baron Fairfax, *Advice to a young lord* (1691), 55-56. Except for the reference to sexual relations, this work is almost an exact copy of Argyle's letter.


57 Evelyn believed that conception could occur during this time and that the offspring would be a leper. Ibid., 123.

58 Ibid.

Josiah Dare, Counsellor Manners, his last legacy to his son (1673), 86.

Ibid., 88.

Ibid., 89.

Caleb Trenchfield, A cap of gray hairs for a green head, or The fathers counsel to his son, an apprentice in London, 4th ed. (1688), 154.

Ibid., 162.

Ibid., 163.

Ibid., 166. This probably reflected the values of the lower classes in which women had more financial responsibility and independence than did elite women.

For discussions of this work, see Ada Wallas, Before the Bluestocking (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1929), 55-72; and Doris Mary Stenton, The English Woman in History (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), 203-204.

Elizabeth was the mother of Philip Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, whose letters to his son are the most famous examples of the genre.

Another example of a father's advice to his daughter was written by Oliver Heywood, a clergyman, and published in 1693. Entirely moralistic and religious in tone, it contained little marital advice beyond recommending "free and cheerful submission and obedience to your husband." Oliver Heywood, Advice to an only child (1693), 81.

Wallas, Bluestocking, 56.


Ibid., 109.

Houlbrooke writes "If the wife were higher in social status than her husband, she might come in time to despise him and seek to command him,...while a man who chooses a wife markedly his social inferior might seek to place her under excessive subjection. Among the upper classes the aim of social endogamy might be waived in the choice of a wife, but much more rarely in that of a husband." Houlbrooke, English Family, 75.

Houlbrooke explains that, during this period, the importance of "political considerations of alliance and good lordship" were declining. Ibid., 74.
There be some men which by religion claim authority over women and they prove their tyranny by holy scripture.

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa

The marriage manual was established as a distinctive genre in England in 1543 with the publication of Miles Coverdale's translation of Heinrich Bullinger's *The christen state of matrimonye*.¹ In reaction to Catholic theologians who had generally viewed the conjugal state as inferior to virginity, the early reformers sought to elevate marriage. Bullinger's intent was to describe a particularly Protestant form of matrimony based on Scriptural authority. He and his many imitators cited Genesis for the origin and sanctity of marriage, used the saga of Abraham as an example of a strong, patriarchal family, and relied heavily on the Pauline epistles for advice about how to live in wedlock.² The 'new' Protestant family was considered a microcosm of the larger worlds of church and state,³ based on a hierarchical structure with the father at the top, it was to be a model of order and obedience. Bullinger's treatise was extremely popular and was reprinted eight times before Mary's accession and again when Elizabeth came to the throne. Later Protestant authors imitated the reformer's organizational pattern, borrowed his metaphors, and, in some cases, lifted entire passages and claimed them as their own.⁴
The literary form established by Bullinger and subsequently widely copied was a combination of theory and practical advice; works of this type described the origin and purpose of matrimony, how a good mate (wife) was to be selected, the role of parents and children in consenting to the match, how domestic relations should be conducted, as well as discussions of the legal and ceremonial aspects of the wedding. Most of these treatises were extremely lengthy, highly repetitious, and contained formulistic advice.

Popular sixteenth works in the Bullinger mode were Henry Smith's *A preparative to marriage* (1591) and *A godly form of household government* (1598) by Robert Cleaver and John Dod. Marriage manuals proliferated during the first half of the seventeenth century as a great number of preachers published their views on the wedded state: William Perkins' *Christian oeconomie: or, a short, survey of the right manner of order a familie* (1609), William Whately's *A bride-bush* (1619) and *The care-cloth* (1624), John Wing's *The crown conjugall* (1620), Thomas Gataker's *Marriage duties* (1620) and *A good wife God's gift* (1623), William Gouge's *Of domestical duties* (1622), Matthew Griffith's *Bethel: or a forme for families* (1633), and Daniel Rogers' *Matrimonial honour* (1642) appeared during this time. During the latter half of the century, *Considerations concerning marriage* (1657) by Edward Reyner, *Christian and conjugall counsell* (1661) by William Thomas, and *A gold chain of directions* (1669) by Immanuel Bourne were published.

In addition, preachers often wrote tracts about specific
issues, such as John Stockwood's *A Bartholemew fairing* (1589) which was entirely devoted to the thesis that children should not marry without parental consent, or William Heale's *An apologie for women; or, An opposition to A.G. his assertion...* that it was lawfull for husbands to beate their wives (1609) whose title is self-explanatory. Others, notably Samuel Hieron, published wedding sermons or commentaries on Biblical texts concerning matrimony.7 Counsel about marriage was also contained in general religious works such as Jeremy Taylor's *The rule and exercises of holy living and of holy dying* (1650), Richard Allestree's *The whole duty of man* (1658), Thomas Gouge's *Christian directions* (1661), and Richard Baxter's *A Christian directory* (1673).8 These books, more widely read than the specific works, consisted of recommendations on all aspects of Christian life, including duties of husbands and wives. Despite the enormous social, political, and religious changes which occurred throughout this period, the marital advice was entirely consistent; the reader would find it difficult to differentiate, for example, between the counsel of Bullinger and that of Allestree who wrote over a century later.

The author of these works were, in every case, ministers of the gospel, usually well-known for their preaching; they held forth from the pulpit as well as in print. Some scholars have termed many of them 'Puritan' and claim that they described unique views of love, marriage, and family life.9 However, those who do so usually study only the works of those
authors who were writing between 1590 and 1630. Thus, they miss the threads of continuity which extend back to the early days of the English Reformation and forward to the post-Restoration period. Moreover, while some of the ministers may have differed from the established church in matters of theology and organization, their view of marriage and family was consonant with that of the Anglican hierarchy. The marriage service in *The Prayer Book* and the homily on matrimony which was read in churches expressed ideas entirely in keeping with those of the 'Puritan' preachers; marriage was not a controversial issue. Levin L. Schücking made a comparison between Richard Baxter who was 'silenced' at the Restoration and Jeremy Taylor who was awarded a bishopric:

> However far apart such people were in their dogmatics and their views on Church government, they were to an astonishing degree in agreement in their ideas concerning practical conduct, in such matters for instance as family duties....[W]e are made to see quite plainly that the main trend of practical piety does not follow the line that divides Anglicans from Sectaries, but rather one which separates the pious or 'saints' from the children of the world. The denominational label has no longer any significance so far as the characteristic pietistic self-reforming English piety is concerned.

This observation could apply to almost any of the authors discussed in this chapter: in their attitudes toward marriage, William Gouge, member of the Westminster Assembly, would have been in entire agreement with Richard Allestree, Chaplain to Charles I.

The intended recipients of all this marital counsel were
the middle-classes. The description of the domestic duties of the married couple and the frequent mention of servants imply "personal control of a small, comfortably off household, not a great aristocratic estate." William and Malleville Haller theorize that books of this sort were probably bought primarily by other preachers and used as a basis for sermons, a practice which would help explain their similarity in style, content, and language. Haller and Haller also note that the works were written from a masculine viewpoint and usually directed to men. Although the authors addressed themselves to women when describing the duties of a wife, they did not "look very much into the hearts of women," but "wrote from a man's point of view, and from that point of view laid down the law to women."

Protestant treatises on matrimony usually began with a paean to the wedded state, an explanation of its sacred origin, and a discussion of its ends or purposes. The extravagant praise of marriage and the insistence on it as a divine institution were, of course, responses to the Catholic Church's contention that celibacy was preferable to marriage. The opening words of the wedding service in Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's *The Book of Common Prayer* introduced the themes and Scriptural references which later writers would refer to again and again: that marriage was instituted by God in paradise (Genesis 2) and symbolized the mystical union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5); that Christ had sanctified it by performing his first miracle at the wedding at Cana (John 2);
and that St. Paul had commended matrimony (I Corinthians 7).

The Prayer Book listed the purposes of marriage as procreation, as a remedy against fornication, and for mutual society, help, and comfort. This order of priorities was identical to that given by Bullinger and was followed by many subsequent writers. However, others, such as Gataker and Cleaver, stressed the primacy of companionship in marriage:

Wedlock or matrimony is...a yoking and joining together of one man and one woman, with the good consent of them both, to the end that they may dwell together in friendship and honesty, one helping and comforting the other, eschewing whoredom, and all uncleannesses, bringing up their children in the fear of God.  

Professor James T. Johnson has argued that the emphasis on fellowship in marriage was a distinctly 'Puritan' development; however, all the Protestant theologians stressed the importance of affective bonds in marriage and it is difficult to see any significant differences between the opinions of those Johnson calls 'Puritan', such as William Perkins and Richard Baxter, and mainstream Anglicans, such as Richard Allestree and Jeremy Taylor.

Although the authors used such words as 'mutual' and 'companionship', their unspoken assumption was that it was the woman who would be a helper and companion to the man as described in the second chapter of Genesis:

And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

(2. 18)
...And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed the flesh instead thereof;

(2. 21)

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

(2. 22)

Thus, while seeming to describe a relationship between equals, they were, in fact, emphasizing male primacy. Woman was created specifically for the purpose of assuaging man's loneliness and helping him in the business of life. It is significant that it was this version of the creation that the Protestants drew upon, the initial creation of man, and woman being formed from his rib, rather that the version in the first chapter of Genesis in which man and woman were created simultaneously:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

(1. 27)

One of the issues related to marriage frequently discussed in the Protestant marriage manuals was the question of consent. The authors believed that the couple must enter into matrimony freely and willingly, and they strongly condemned forced marriages. Allestree castigated parents who "out of an eagerness of bestowing them wealthy" forced their children "to marry utterly against their own inclinations." Presumably daughters, over whom parents exerted greater control, were more
often married against their wills than were sons. The office of Christian parents described the grim consequences of such a match:

Some examples we have of these worldly minded men, that upon a greedy desire to prefer their daughters unto the glorious palace of wicked mammon, have by constraint married them, where either inequality of years, deformity of body, want of wit, or lack of honesty and sober living, have so wounded the daughter's heart, that her marriage hath been her burial. Some have consumed and waxed like ghosts, some have lived to see their husbands to spend all, and some have learned such manners, as it had been better for them either never to have been born, or not to have had such wooden sots to their parents.

Bishop Taylor believed that young people could be induced to marry where the parents wished, but ought not be compelled:

"Let them [the children] be persuaded with reasonable inducements to make them willing and to choose according to the parents' wish, but at no hand let them be forced. Better to sit up all night, than to go to bed with a dragon."

If the consent of the bride and groom was essential, so too was the consent of both sets of parents. Citing the fifth commandment and other Scriptural references concerning obedience, the ministers unanimously deplored those who married without the expressed blessing of their families. Henry Smith described the sacred origin of parental consent:

...[I]n the first institution of marriage, when there was no father to give consent, then our heavenly Father gave his consent: God supplied the place of the father, and brought his daughter unto her husband, and ever since, the father after the same manner, hath offered his daughter unto her husband.
Expressing a more mercantile point of view, Allestree contended,

Children are so much the goods, the possessions of their parents, that they cannot, without a kind of theft, give away themselves without the allowance of those that have the right in them. 25

Richard Baxter flatly declared that parents' commandments to children were analogous to God's to man and not to obey them was a grievous sin. 26

Although the Protestant authors were alike in their advocacy of parental consent, they differed in their views as to the extent of family involvement: some believed that parents should play the paramount part in selecting a prospective spouse, 27 others saw the parental role as primarily advisory, 28 while a few seemed to feel it adequate for parents to assent to an appropriate match which the young people desired. 29 Those writers who counselled parents to be actively involved in the selection process invariably cited the scriptural example of Abraham choosing a wife for his son Isaac. 30 Gataker, however, realized that the best-intentioned parents would not always be successful in arranging the marriages of their offspring:

There are secret links of affection that no reason can be rendered of: as there are inbred dislikes that can neither be resolved, nor reconciled. When parents have a long time beaten the bush, another oft, as we say, catcheth the bird: affections are set some other way, and cannot be removed. 31

This is the only indication that there could be some difficulty in reconciling the marital desires of the different
generations. Most of the writers assumed that all parties would happily assent to a suitable match, and did not deal with the issue of intractable parents or children. Nor did they advocate any role for themselves as clergymen in resolving differences in this or any other kind of marital crisis.

The stern denunciations of children who married without their parents' assent can be traced to two causes. Firstly, it was, in fact, remarkably easy for young people to espouse themselves without reference to family or church. Until Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, the laws in England governing espousals and marriages were in considerable disarray. Henry Swinburne, a leading legal expert during the early decades of the seventeenth century, described the situation in a treatise of spousals or matrimonial contracts. After the age of consent (twelve for girls, fourteen for boys), a couple could bind themselves together in one of two ways: by a promise to wed in the future (de futuro) or by an immediate commitment (de praesenti). Both contracts consisted solely of mutually spoken vows: in the first case, they were given in the future tense ("I will take you for my wife"); in the second, the present (I do take you, etc."). The former type of espousal was not binding; the latter, however, was.

But that woman and that man, which have contracted spousals de praesenti...cannot by any agreement dissolve those spousals, but are reputed for very husband and wife in respect of the substance, and indissoluble knot of matrimony. Moreover, neither witnesses nor consummation was essential:
Swinburne stated it was mutual consent, not "public solemnization nor carnal copulation" which effected matrimony and he was supported by canon and civil law.

To what extent young people availed themselves of this privilege is unknown. John R. Gillis observes that clandestine marriages and espousals were more common among lower classes since couples were not economically dependent on their parents. However, the fifteenth-century case of Margery Paston, who secretly betrothed herself to the family's bailiff and withstood enormous pressure from family, friends, and clergy who sought to break the contract, makes one wonder how many other such examples, unfortunately undocumented, existed.

In any case, the insistence on the necessity of parental advice and consent in match-making seems to indicate that the authors of marriage manuals were aware of the enormous latitude of the marriage laws of England and were grimly determined that young people not avail themselves of it.

Also, a son or daughter who married without parental consent threatened the patriarchal authority which the Protestant writers believed so sacred. For a child to go against the wishes of his or her father was an act of rebellion which threatened all authority figures; hence, the condemnatory language reserved for disobedient children often resembled that used for traitors or heretics. Stockwood described children who married without consent as

rebels against God, transgressors of the laws of Nature, breakers of the common rule and custom of all well-governed children, and such...as would bring in
all confusion and disorder in altering and changing God's own course to set up and establish their own unbridled lust and lawless affection. 38

Therefore, the emphasis which the authors of marital advice placed on parental consent may be seen as an effort to consolidate power: as ministers of the gospel, they sought to bring marriage under church dominion; as fathers they sought to control their children.

Another issue which greatly concerned the marital advisors was the choice of the prospective bride. Since, according to St. Paul, the man's primary duty in marriage was to love his wife, it was imperative that he marry one that he either did or could love. However, love was considered a rational matter involving choice, not passion. Over and over again the counsellors advised how to "choose your love and love your choice." 39 Since not love, but subjection was the woman's main duty in marriage, presumably the choice of a spouse was not so important for her.

As in other issues, Bullinger's counsel concerning choice was definitive, and was copied or adapted by later authors. 40 He instructed the prospective groom to pay more attention to the "riches of the mind and body" of his intended than to "temporal substances" such as nobility, wealth, and family connections. Qualities sought in a wife were godliness, virtue, honesty, and health; these characteristics were to be determined by careful observation of the woman's speech, manners, clothes, and behavior. 41
As expected, the Protestant authors strongly emphasized the importance of marrying a "godly" woman of similar religious convictions. Smith wrote, "We are taught to marry in the Lord, then we must choose in the Lord too," and added, "Our spouse must be like Christ's spouse, that is, graced with gifts and embroidered with virtues as if we did marry holiness itself." He continued, "As we should not be yoked with Infidels, so we should not be yoked with Papists, and so we should not be yoked with Atheists." Cleaver and Dod counselled, "Religion and faith must be considered lest he [the man] make divorce of the true faith or bring it into peril." If the husband had been "snared" by a wife "poisoned with superstition and Popery" he must "call upon God, and live in his fear, in faithfulness, in patience, in discretion and godly counsel labouring to win her from the same." Rogers lamented the difficulty of finding a truly pious woman in such a sinful world:

...[T]here are so few to be found, in this woeful barren world, of such as be religious, and those who are merely civil are counted puritans, and those precise whose manners are not debauched.

Prayer was advised to ensure a wise choice was made.

Although the authors condemned those who married for worldly gain and emphasized the spiritual aspect of matrimony, they were, in Lawrence Stone's words, "as respectful as ever of the need for social equality and economic security in mate selection." They justified their concern for the practical
aspect of wedlock by quoting Paul's words, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers," (2 Corinthians 6.14), arguing that the apostle advocated equality not only in religion, but in age, estate, and social standing. Samuel Hieron wrote,

It is not denied that outward things in matters of wedlock be looked to. It is fit that, as for years, so for estate and means, there should be proportion, for God is not the author of confusion. 47

William Perkins stated that spouses should be of similar social condition:

Thus it is a seemly and commendable practice, that, the Prince, the noble-man, the freeman, the gentleman, the yeoman, etc. should be joined in society with them, that are of the same or like condition with themselves and not otherwise. 48

Despite their concern with spiritual values, the clergymen did not turn a blind eye to the things of the world.

The Protestant marriage manuals contained extensive advice concerning the separate duties of husbands and wives and their common duties. The husband's primary duty, as has been stated, was to love his wife as commanded by St. Paul. This meant that he was to protect and provide for her. It was his duty to instruct, govern, and admonish his wife as well as his children and servants, but he was to do so with kindness and patience:

...[A] Man must entreat his wife with gentleness and softness; not expecting that wisdom, nor that faith, nor that patience, nor that strength in the weaker vessel, which should be in the stronger. 49

The authors criticized husbands who used force to assert
their authority. Perkins stated, "But...[the husband] may not chastise...[his wife] either with stripes, or strokes." The anonymous author of *The anathomie of sinne* counselled that a wife was to be admonished often, reprehended seldom, and struck never. William Heale wrote a thirty-five page tract in which he cited examples from the classics and nature as well as, of course, Scripture, to prove that wife-beating was unacceptable. That so many of the preachers specifically referred to this in their works seems to indicate that it was a serious problem among their parishioners and readers.

The wife's first duty, as ordered by Peter and Paul was to be subject to her husband and obey him absolutely. Thomas Gouge wrote:

...[subjection] is not only a duty, but the ground of all other duties whatsoever; for till the wife be fully satisfied about the superiority of her husband, no duty will be performed as it ought.53

One of the salient features of the Protestant treatises on marriage was the insistent emphasis on male superiority. The inferior nature of woman was implicit in the Creation in that man had been formed in God's image, woman in man's image, and she had been make for him, not vice-versa. Moreover, Eve had been the first to transgress, illustrating her weaker nature. Therefore, since God himself had ordained the inferior status of the female, the only way for a woman to obtain salvation was to submit cheerfully and willingly to her husband and obey his commandments as she would the Lord's.
The wife's obedience to her husband's wishes was unconditional and not dependent upon the man's superior character. Gataker believed that even if a woman was "of greater spirit, and in some respect of better parts" than her spouse, she must "acknowledge her husband, as God hath appointed him, to be her superior as he is her husband and her head." William Gouge admonished,

If they [wives] note any defect of nature, and deformity of body, or any enormous and notorious vices in their husband, then ought they to turn their eyes and thoughts from his person to his place, and from his vicious qualities to his honourable office (which is to be an husband).

Even should a godly woman be married to a profane man, she was to obey him in all things not directly contrary to the word of God, for,

spiritual blindness disableth not from civil government. Indeed nothing that such a man doeth is acceptable to God, or available to his own salvation; but yet it may be profitable to man: a wicked man may be provident enough for wife, children, and whole family in outward temporal things.

There is evidence that the ideal state of wifely submission was not always attained. Allestree condemned "the peevish stubborness of many wives who resist the lawful commands of their husbands, only because they are impatient of this duty of subjection, which God requires of them." Gouge strongly refuted "the opinion of many wives, who think themselves every way as good as their husbands, and no way inferior to them." The authors' continual insistence on
female subordination may indicate that the reverse was often the case; as William and Malleville Haller noted, "It is not commonly necessary to preach submission to the meek."\(^{59}\)

The views expressed by these authors on the woman's role were entirely consistent; their views on woman's nature were not. Some, such as Gataker and Wing, were extravagant in their praise of 'the good wife':

> No earthly favour appertaining to our present temporary state, which we may possibly have, while we live here, is beyond, or equal to her: none is better or greater, nay, none is so good, or so great; yielding such honour, joy, advantage, and contentment, as a worthy wife doth. Among transitory kindesses, she is the most transcendent.\(^{60}\)

Cleaver and Dod took a more sensible attitude, admitting that women were, like men, neither entirely good nor bad:

> Most true it is that women are as men are, reasonable creatures, and have flexible wits, both to good and evil, the which with use, discretion and good counsel, may be altered and turned. And although there be some evil and lewd women, yet that doth no more prove the malice of their natures, than of men...\(^{61}\)

Richard Baxter was the only overt misogynist in the group, but Baxter, unlike the other authors, had a negative view of marriage. Attempting to dissuade young men from matrimony, he warned,

> And it is no small patience which the natural imbecility of the female sex requireth you to prepare. Except it be a very few that are patient and manlike, women are commonly of potent fantasies, and tender passionate impatient spirits, easily cast into anger, or jealousy, or discontent: and of weak understanding, and therefore unable to reform themselves.\(^{62}\)
Further duties of a wife were to be meek, humble, sober, and silent. Perhaps the best summation of the woman's role in marriage was written in the form of a prayer of a young wife:

I most entirely beseech thee, to walk worthy of my vocation, to knowledge my husband to be my head, to be subject unto him, to learn thy blessed word of him, to reverence him, to obey him, to please him, to be ruled by him, peaceably and quietly to live with him, to wear such apparel as is meet for my degree, and by no means to delight in costly jewels, and proud gallant vestures (?); but always to use (?) such clothing, as becometh a sober, chaste, and Christian woman, circumspectly and warily to look to my household, that nothing perish through my negligence; and always have a diligent eye, that no dishonesty, no wickedness, no ungodliness be committed in my house....

Mutual duties included sexual fidelity and the maintenance of regular sexual relations. Some Protestant theologians recognized the importance of the physical side of matrimony. Referring, as always, to Scripture, they cited the fifth chapter of Proverbs and the twenty-sixth of Genesis to prove that God countenanced regular conjugal relations. Therefore, they were insistent that a married couple cohabit and refrain from intercourse only by mutual consent.

Bullinger stressed the importance of mutually satisfactory relations, particularly in the early days of wedlock:

If two bodies at the first be not well joined one to the other, they never are fastened right afterward. But if the first coupling and joining together be good, then can there afterward no violence drive the bonds asunder....They therefore that are married must apply their special diligence that their first cohabitation and dwelling together be loving and friendly.
The author of *The office of Christian parents* wrote that the married couple

may joyfully give due benevolence one to the other; as two musical instruments rightly fitted, do make a most pleasant and sweet harmony in a well tuned concert.65

Gataker emphasized that "the Holy Ghost did allow some such private dalliance and behaviour to married persons between themselves as to others might seem dotage."67 Perkins, on the other hand, viewed sexual satisfaction as more the man's province than the woman's: "This rejoicing and delight is more permitted to the man, than to the woman; and to them both, more in their young years, than in their old age."67

However, the historian should be wary of over-emphasizing this aspect of Protestant marital advice. Most writers avoided the issue of physical relations in marriage and stressed the spiritual relationship between husband and wife. Schücking's observation that 'Puritan' authors displayed "a complete lack of inhibition in...[their] readiness to theorize on the erotic side of marriage"68 is an overstatement and one which he must use Milton's poetry to support. Similarly, Roland Frye's contention that 'Puritan' teaching advocated "ardent physical love"69 is supported by quotations from the few writers who did deal with this issue; he overlooks the many who did not.

Other mutual duties for a married couple included attending to each other's spiritual welfare, living together with patience and forbearance, raising children in fear of the
Lord, and performing appropriate domestic occupations. Again and again the readers were reminded that an orderly, peaceful household was pleasing to God; a fractious, tumultuous one, anathema.

Thus, the Protestant authors of marital advice attempted to impose religious values on domestic life. At a time when the State was exerting more control over the public life of the individual, the Church was endeavouring to restrict private behaviour and influence attitudes; it is not accidental that the two movements coincided. The preachers' insistence on order and obedience within the family was extended to include order in the public realm and obedience to all authority. In the preface to his work *Bethel: or a forme for families*, Matthew Griffith described his purpose in writing, which was to ensure that the reader be "both a good servant to God, and a good subject to the King."70 In Protestant terms, the 'good' husband and father was necessarily a good subject because his family represented the larger world of the commonwealth or kingdom. Few historians have pointed out that by elevating the state of matrimony and by prescribing the behaviour and attitudes which husband, wife, and children were to follow and hold, the authors of marriage manuals were acting as agents of the Church and State to exert social control over the populace.71

Moreover, the subordination of women was an important aspect of this process. The growth of the authoritarian state and the authoritarian family were parallel developments. This
is not to argue that wives had not always been subject to their husbands; what was unique about the Protestant view was the connection made between the woman's spiritual salvation and the performance of her wifely duties; once wed, the wife had to submit, willingly and cheerfully, to her husband's commands, not as a social duty, but as a religious one. Thus, personal salvation was equated with wifely submission.

Furthermore, under Protestantism, marriage became the only option for a woman. Those who had previously gained a degree of autonomy and, in some cases, power, by embracing the religious life were no longer able to do so. Linda T. Fitz observes,

The exaltation of marriage might be seen as a high price to pay for making wives respectable, considering that along with it went the annihilation of alternatives to marriage....There is much evidence to suggest that the monastic life offered a genuine alternative to the woman who wished to escape male domination - an alternative which Protestantism abolished.72

Not only was the cloister abolished, but so, too, were religious organizations which had permitted women to take active roles in civic life.73 The family, rather than the Church, became the spiritual centre of society, and it was to her husband, rather than to her priest, that the woman was to look for spiritual guidance.

In their attempt to portray the Protestant sanctification of marriage and family as a positive development, some modern scholars seem determined to misinterpret what the marriage
manuals said about the position of women. Paul Siegal states, rather confusingly, that "The Puritans,...by emphasizing the inferior status allotted to woman in the Bible, gave her a new freedom." On the other hand, James Johnson believes that the female position was enhanced by "the heightened conception of woman which is implicit in the assertion of companionship." Wright contends that the treatises on marriage showed a gradual improvement in their attitudes toward the position of women, an undocumented assertion of which this reader has found no evidence. Lawrence Stone is one of the few who equates the elevation of matrimony with the subordination of women:

...[I]t could be argued that the Protestant sanctification of marriage and the demand for married love itself facilitated the subordination of wives. Women were now expected to love and cherish their husbands after marriage and were taught that it was their sacred duty to do so.

It is impossible to know the extent of the influence of the marriage manuals. We do know that they were published frequently and many went into several editions, but whether this indicates that they were widely read or that a small segment of the populace read a number of such books is impossible to ascertain. Presumably, only those with strong religious convictions would have read such extended treatises; Haller and Haller may be correct in their assertion that the marriage manuals were studied primarily by other clergymen. While there is no evidence that any shortened versions intended for a wider audience were ever issued, some of the ideas
contained in these works were borrowed and adapted by the authors of more popular forms of advisory literature.
NOTES

1 C.L. Powell noted of Bullinger's work, "It seems fair to say that the full form and content of the typical family book was here first established." C.L. Powell, English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1972), 115. Powell's work was first published in 1917.

2 William and Malleville Haller observed, "The translation of Bullinger's work served as a textbook on the key places in scripture relating to marriage and as a model for later books on the same subject." William and Malleville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," Huntington Library Quarterly 5 (1941-42): 240.

3 William Gouge stated, "For the family is a seminary of the Church and Commonwealth....Whence it followeth, that a conscionable performance of domestical and household duties, tend to the good ordering of Church and Commonwealth...." William Gouge, Of domestical duties (1622), 16. Daniel Rogers claimed, "Marriage is the preservative of chastity, the seminary of the commonwealth, seed-plot of the Church, pillar (under God) of the world, right hand of providence, supporter of laws, states, orders, offices, gifts and services...." Daniel Rogers, Matrimonial honour (1642), 7. W. and M. Haller noted of the family, "The preachers described it again and again as a little church and a little state in which the father was responsible for providing both for religious instruction, prayer, and reading of scripture, and for the employment of each member according to his or her ability, in some useful occupation." Haller and Haller, "Puritan Art," 247.

4 For discussions on Bullinger's influence on later authors, see the following: Louis B. Wright, Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958) 205-206; Levin L. Schücking, The Puritan Family, trans. Brian Battershaw (New York: Scholcker Books, 1970), 18. This work was originally published in German in 1929.

5 Cleaver and Dod's work was extremely popular and was issued seven times within thirty years.

6 Most of these treatises went through at least two editions. Whately's Bride-bush was issued three times during the seventeenth century and again in the eighteenth and nineteenth; Wing's work was printed twice; Gataker's Duties twice and A good wife three times; Of domestical duties by William Gouge had three editions; Griffith's Bethel four; and Rogers' Matrimonial Honour was issued twice.
For example, Richard Bernard published a commentary on the Book of Ruth (1628) which discussed marriage; a work entitled Oeconomia sacra (1685) was a discourse on the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, a favourite theme with many of the authors.

Taylor's work was published eighteen times by the turn of the century; Allestree's, a best-seller was reprinted thirty-eight times in less than fifty years; Gouge's went through eight editions.


Kathleen M. Davis contends that the 'Puritan' authors - Smith, Whately, Dod, Gouge, Cleaver and Snawsel - wrote nothing about marriage which cannot be found in the works of pre-Reformation writers such as Vives, Erasmus, and William Harrington. However, the earlier authors did not present a complete doctrine of marriage and family life as did the Protestants who followed Bullinger's lead. Also, the rise in literacy and the proliferation of books in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the fact that the 'Puritans' were preachers in addition to being authors, meant that their views were more widely disseminated. Kathleen M. Davis, "The sacred condition of equality - how original were Puritan doctrines of marriage?" Social History 5 (May, 1977): 563-581.

M.M. Knappen stated that while marriage was not a controversial issue between factions in the Church of England, divorce was. M.M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 456. For a discussion of this issue, see Powell, "The Puritan-Anglican Controversy on Divorce," English Domestic Relations, 70-83.

Schücking, Puritan Family, xiii.

See Wright, "Instruction in Domestic Relations," Middle-Class Culture, 201-227.


Haller and Haller, "Puritan Art," 240.

Ibid., 253.
17 Smith, Perkins, and Gouge follow this order.

18 Robert Cleaver and John Dod, _A godly form of household government_ (1603), 98.


20 Richard Allestree, _The whole duty of man_ (1700), 276.

21 The office of Christian parents (Cambridge: 1616), 141.


23 See, for example, William Perkins, _Christian oeconomie: or, a short survey of the right manner of ordering a family according to the Scriptures_ (1609), 68-69; Cleaver and Dod, _A godly form_, 152. Bullinger contended that only Papists denied the need for parental consent in marriage.

24 Henry Smith, _A preparative to marriage_ (1591), 43.

25 Allestree, _The whole duty_, 264.

26 Richard Baxter, _A Christian directory_ (1673), 476.

27 See, for instance, Taylor, _The rule and exercises_, 154; and John Stockwood, _A Bartholomew fairing for parentes_ (1589), 51.

28 For example, Cleaver and Dod, _A godly form_, 133; and Smith, _A preparative_, 47.

29 See, for example, Daniel Rogers, _Matrimonial honour_ (1642), 87.

30 Thomas Gataker's _A mariage praier, or succinct meditations_ (1624) is entirely devoted to a discussion of the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis which describes the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca.

31 Thomas Gataker, _A good wife Gods gift_ (1623), 11.


33 The Anglican wedding service incorporates both types of promise.
Henry Swinburne, *A treatise of spousals or matrimonial contracts* (1686), 13. This work is thought to have been written in the 1620s.

Ibid. Stone contends that the contract *de futuro* was binding if followed by consummation, and a contract *de praesenti* had to be given before witnesses. However, Swinburne did not indicate that witnesses were necessary. Stone, *The Family*, 30-31.

Gillis, *For Better*, 84-105.


Many of the authors used this phrase. For specific examples, see Samuel Hieron, *The bridegroome* (1613), 8; Smith, *A preparative*, 63.

Cleaver and Dod and Griffith use almost the identical words of Bullinger.

Heinrich Bullinger, *The christen state of matrimonye* (1543?), 53.


Ibid., 48.


Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 64.

Smith, *A preparative*, 68.


The anathomie of sinne (1603), no pagination.

William Heale, *An apologie for women* (1609), entire work.

Thomas Gouge, *Christian directions* (1661), 139.
54 Gataker, A good wife, 10.
55 Gouge, Of domestical duties, 278.
56 Ibid., 290.
57 Allestree, The whole duty, 283.
58 Gouge, Of domestical duties, 273.
59 Haller and Haller, "Puritan Art," 249.
60 John Wing, The crowne conjugall or the spouse royall (Middleburgh: 1620), 21.
61 Cleaver and Dod, A godly form, 160.
62 Baxter, A Christian directory, 480. In the first part of his work, Baxter attempted to dissuade young men from marrying. However, he conceded that most would probably wed anyway, and, in the second part, he gave the standard advice.
63 Thomas Bentley, The monument of matrones (1582), 68.
64 Bullinger, The Christen state, 62.
65 The office of Christian parents (1616), 140.
66 Gataker, A good wife Gods gift and A wife indeed (1620), 43.
67 Perkins, Christian oeconomie, 122.
68 Schüking, Puritan Family, 38.
70 As cited by Wright, Middle-Class Culture, 223.
71 Stone is an exception; see The Family, 136-146.
72 Fitz, "'What Says the Married Woman?'", 8.
73 Alice Clark contended, "Any association or combination of women outside the limits of their own families was discouraged, and the benefits which had been extended to them in this respect by the Catholic Religion were specially depreciated." Alice Clark, Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 303. This work was first published in 1919.
76 Wright, Middle-Class Culture, 227.
77 Stone, The Family, 141.
CHAPTER III
WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

Wife and Servant are the same,
But only differ in the Name:

Lady Mary Chudleigh

Advice about marriage took many forms. Much of it was direct: successive older generations advised the younger on how to select and live with a wife; ministers of the gospel expressed their vision of "holy matrimony" from the pulpit and in print; courtesy books often contained chapters devoted to the choice of a spouse and marital duties and monographs were printed on the same subjects.¹ The counsellors were men and their recommendations were, for the most part, aimed at a male audience.

However, marital advice was also given indirectly. Works written about women usually contained a discussion of matrimony; authors did not separate 'woman' from her role in society, which was, of course, 'wife'. What purported to be objective discussions concerning the nature of woman were actually prescriptive treatises which defined the female's place and depicted those characteristics which were acceptable and those which were not. Advice concerning marriage written specifically for women merely complemented the views expressed in other works.

Though much was written about women and for women, the female voice was rarely heard, until the latter half of the
seventeenth century when, reacting to social change and a new intellectual climate, women authors began to express their own ideas about marriage, ideas which, in some cases, presented a radically different view of matrimony.

During the sixteenth century in England, the medieval debate concerning the nature of the female sex was vigourously renewed. Discourses on this topic by celebrated continental scholars appeared in translation, and native authors added their own voices to the controversy. For the most part, this polemical literature consisted of attacks on or defenses of women. The anti-feminists based their theory of woman's inferiority primarily on the mode of her creation and her responsibility for the Fall; to support their argument they cited examples of wicked or weak females from Scripture, classical philosophy and literature, history, and the natural world. Apologists for women used the same theoretical base to defend the opposite position and drew their illustrative cases from identical sources. The dialectic was, in fact, not a genuine debate, but an intellectual exercise, a literary convention, a "formal controversy", whose participants were primarily concerned with "literary finesse."

The authors involved in this debate presented stereotypical views of woman which had little to do with her 'true nature', much to do with her place in society. Professor Linda Woodbridge charges,

Attacks and defenses disagree, or pretend to disagree, about whether there are more bad than good
women in the world; but their definitions of female
goodness and badness are identical.\textsuperscript{6}

In these discourses, the 'good woman', like the virtuous one
whose price was above rubies,\textsuperscript{7} turned out to be, not good
'woman' at all, but good 'wife', replete with wifely virtues -
obedience, piety, submissiveness, chastity, and skill in
housekeeping tasks.\textsuperscript{8} Contrasted with this paragon was either
the 'bad' wife - shrewish, extravagant, lazy, disobedient - or
the whore.

Sir Thomas Elyot, one of the first Englishmen to enter the
debate with \textit{The defence of good woman} (1545), had a female
character describe the prime duty of wives which was to "honour
our husbands after God; which honour resteth in true
obedience," a sentiment with which the Protestant preachers
would have heartily concurred. She continued,

\begin{quote}
But in a woman, no virtue is equal to temperence,
whereby in her words and deeds she always shows a
just moderation, knowing when time is to speak, and
when to keep silence, when to be occupied, and when
to be merry. And if she measure it to the will of
her husband, she doeth the more wisely.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

'Good' women were also praised for their domestic skills.
Edward Gosynhill's defense emphasized the many duties which
fell to women in the management of an estate.\textsuperscript{10} A character in
Edmund Tilney's \textit{The Flower of Friendshippe} (3rd ed., 1577)
advised the wife to

\begin{quote}
look well to her housewifery and not only to see that
all be done, but that all be well done, to the
contentacion (?) of her husband, even in things of
least importance, and to occupy herself accordingly,
not to sit always idle, but to spend her time in some
profitable exercise, as with her needle....It is also
a great want in a woman, if she be unskillful in dressing of meat. For it is the chiefest point of a housewife to cherish her husband, who being sick, will have the best appetite to the meat of his wife's dressing, and if she cherish him well, he will love her better ever after.\textsuperscript{11}

While seeming to discuss the nature of woman, most participants were, in fact, simply prescribing her role in society.

The 'controversy' continued during the succeeding century; some works merely catalogued 'good' and 'bad' women, others directly discussed characteristics of 'good' wives and offered advice about how to choose and treat them. One of the most popular works of the early decades was a violent harangue against the female sex delivered by Joseph Swetnam and published under the full title The arraignment of lewd, idle froward, and unconstant women; Or the vanitie of them chuse you whether. With a commendation of the wise, vertuous, and honest woman - (1615).\textsuperscript{12} Actually Swetnam, dubbed "The Woman Hater" in his own time, made little effort to commend or describe the "wise, vertuous and honest woman"; the greater part of this abusive treatise was given over to insults and invectives which seem to be applied to every female.\textsuperscript{13}

Swetnam's work was a corruption of the 'controversial' genre.\textsuperscript{14} Whereas previous works were formal in structure and satirical in tone, The arraignment was rambling and repetitive, vituperative and bitter. It is difficult to understand its popularity. Perhaps, because of the misogynist attitudes of King James and the homosexual flavour of the court, to express strongly anti-feminist sentiments had become fashionable. Or, the enthusiastic acceptance of Swetnam's piece may be an
indication of hostility toward city women who were behaving in untraditional ways: women who, as Professor Woodbridge describes them, were appearing more frequently in public places, sometimes in masculine attire.¹⁵

The arraignment of...women was divided into three main chapters, the first of which, in a disorganized and repetitious manner, described the faults of the female sex and warned men against marriage. Women were "angry, proud, and bold" and a curse to mankind. The author asked, "What wise man then will change gold for dross, pleasure for pain, a quiet life for wrangling brawls, from which the married men are never free?"¹⁶ Swetnam warned against marrying for love which would not last and cautioned against being ensnared by a beautiful face; because, in the dark, he noted, all women were the same.¹⁷

The second chapter continued in the same manner, but focused more specifically on the lewd and lustful nature of the 'fair sex' and the means by which they trapped and ensnared the male.¹⁸ The author's language became more and more extreme:

Then who can but say, that women sprang from the Devil, whose heads, hearts, minds and souls are evil?¹⁹

Eagles eat not men till they are dead, but women devour them alive: for a woman will pick thy pocket, and empty thy purse, laugh in thy face, and cut thy throat: they are ungrateful, perjured, full of fraud, flaunting, and deceit, unconstant, waspish, toyish, light, sullen, proud, discourteous, and cruel....²⁰

A fairly complete catalogue of faults!

The Woman Hater's advice concerning marriage was to avoid
it if at all possible; he instructed men to keep busy, "for so long as thy mind or thy body is in labour, the love of a woman is not remembered, nor lust ever thought upon." After this enjoiinder, Swetnam gave specific counsel about the choice of a wife, counsel which was commonplace and relied heavily on other published works. The prospective husband was to look at the woman's personal qualities and the characters of her parents, and not be dazzled by beauty. Although the author warned against marrying solely for money, he conceded that a happy union was impossible without adequate means - considering his opinion of women, that Swetnam could even conceive of a "happy union" is rather astonishing!

The tone of the work changed dramatically when the author described the duties of husband and wife. Indeed, one suspects that this section may have been cribbed from another source. The good husband was to satisfy the physical demands of his wife so that "neither necessity, nor superfluity be the occasion to work her dishonour;" he was to be faithful, loving, and honest, listen to his wife's counsel and chastise her only in private. A wife was to be sober and chaste in appearance, deferential and patient in behavior. Swetnam's work not only combined separate genres, the discourse on women and the domestic conduct book, but also, in a schizoid manner, two entirely disparate views of the female sex: woman as vicious, lustful schemer and woman as patient, loving wife.

Swetnam's attack inspired other authors to take up the pen in defense of women. These works, righteous and indignant in
tone, extolled feminine virtues and cited the usual illustrations from Scripture and the classics. Daniel Tuvil's response, for instance, entitled *Asylum veneris, or A sanctuary for ladies justly protecting them, their virtues, and sufficiencies from the foule aspersions and forged imputations of traducing spirits* (1616), contained chapters devoted to the female virtues - chastity, humility, modesty, silence, and constance. In the epilogue, the author gave practical advice about marital relations. He confessed that, despite his glowing tributes, women "are not all of them saints...but such as have their imperfections and defects, as well as we." It was the husband's duty to correct his wife's faults by setting a good example and with loving and private admonitions. "If," he counselled, "we would have women without spots, let us keep our selves without stains." Several female authors, whose works will be examined later in this chapter, also replied to Swetnam's charges; none of the responses, however, attained the popularity of the Woman Hater's harangue.

A related genre which contained advice about marriage as well as descriptions of women was the collection of portraits or character sketches. Written in both prose and verse, these works ranged from the serious to the satirical and invariably included a profile of 'the good wife', often with companion pieces on the maid and widow as well as on less admirable women. Many collections depicted male as well as female characters; whereas the men were categorized according to their function in society - soldier, magistrate, nobleman, etc. - the
women were defined solely according to their relationship with men—maid, wife, widow, or whore.

Some of these works were extremely conventional, both in their advice about marriage and descriptions of good wives. Others, however, contained such hyperbolic excesses, both in the praise and dispraise of women, that the reader must conclude that the authors were more concerned with extravagant literary expression than with a serious consideration of marriage or women. Thomas Fuller's work falls into the first category. Not content simply to describe the good wife, he laid down strict rules for her to follow. She was to obey her husband; never cross him in anger or betray his secrets; stay home rather than gad abroad; wear fitting, frugal garments; appear, as well as be, chaste and modest; control and teach her children; order her servants well; and, rather surprisingly, not express excessive grief at her husband's illness.27

The poet Nicholas Breton wrote several works in which he contrasted a good and bad wife. His good wife we have encountered before: meek, quiet, constant, devout, thrifty, patient, and modest.28 His greatest condemnation and most colourful prose he expended on the "unquiet" wife, the shrew:

An unquiet woman is the misery of man, whose demeanor is not to be described but in extremities. Her voice is the screeching of an owl, her eye the poison of a cockatrice, her hand the claw of a crocodile and her heart a cabinet of horror. She is the grief of nature, the wound of wit, the trouble of reason, and the abuse of time....She is the seed of trouble, the fruit of travail, the taste of bitterness, and the digestion of death.29
Equally as extravagant was Richard Graham's praise of the virtuous wife, a saintly creature who was the mainstay, not only of her family, but of the commonwealth and society at large:

This fair creature is a portion of her self; 'tis she who fastens a blessing to all her husband's undertakings; 'tis she who though she brings not riches, yet gathers them; 'tis she who presents him with fair and chaste children to adorn his table, and support his age; 'tis she who giveth her king loyal subjects, and her country good and just patriots; 'tis she who in her beloved's absence shuts her gates to all foreigners, and at his return recreates, and caresses him with chaste embraces and heals him with balmy kisses; 'tis she who by prudence fills his granaries within, whilst he supplies her from without; 'tis she who feeds the poor and clothes the naked; 'tis she who loves his friends and hates not, but prays for the conversion of his enemies; 'tis her breast which receives his cares, and her lips give him words of joy.

A bleak picture of wives, husbands, and marriage in general was drawn by John Taylor in A juniper lecture. With the description of all sorts of women, good, and bad: From the modest to the maddest, from the most civil, to the scold rampant, their praise and dispraise compendiously related (1639). Taylor's many characters "lectured" in separate chapters; despite the title, most of the women portrayed were lustful, vicious scolds, their husbands, brutal, impotent sots. The language was colourful, if crude. A wife complained of her husband,

…But I am married to a grumbling maulthead, a boor, a dung-hill, a cullion, a common town-bull: (out upon thee varlet) I defy thee, I spit at thee, and I may curse the time that ever I saw thee: thou keep' st me like a drudge, there's not a bawd, queen punke, tib, trash, trull, or trully-bub, oyster-wife, or kitchen stuff slut, but lives a merrier life than I do.
In one of Taylor's more explicit passages, a young girl explained what she required in a husband:

...I will have a husband that shall be always provided like a soldier, never not with standing, but in a sentinel posture, with his match lighted, and cocked bolt upright, and ready to do execution: not like a door-mouse, always sleeping; or like a drone in the hive, live idly: but I will have a man active and nimble, and lively like the spring, that can come off and on bravely, without a word of command, and not be forced by art to do what nature hath taught him.32

Such works were obviously intended more for entertainment than for edification; the most popular and influential example of this genre, however, was pedestrian, dull, and sanctimonious in tone. Sir Thomas Overbury's "A Wife", first published in 1613, had gone through nine editions by 1616; ten more reprints were subsequently made. The poem was accompanied by several character sketches including "A good wife" which was directly analagous to the poem, "A very woman" which condemned worldly vanity, and "A virtuous widow" which decried second marriages. The merits of Overbury's work are few; whereas the very banality of the poem may have contributed to its wide acceptance, the main reason for its popularity was due, no doubt, to the fact that the author was the victim in one of the most celebrated murder cases of the period.33 The contrast between the moralistic tone of the piece and the lascivious and criminal goings-on of the author and his court circle must have provided amusement for many readers.

Overbury's "Wife" was written completely from a man's
point-of-view; indeed, woman (Eve) was created by God specifically for the purpose of becoming a wife. Marriage was designed so that the male would avoid fornication, obtain comfort, and continue his line:

God to each Man a private Woman gave,
That in that Center his desires might stint,
That he a comfort like himself might have,
And that on her his like he might imprint.34

On the choice of a wife, Overbury affirmed that neither beauty, birth, nor portion should be the decisive factors; man should choose his wife for her virtue and piety. However, when goodness was combined with the more worldly attributes, the best possible condition was attained. The author also desired that his wife be understanding and have some conversation, but little education:

A passive understanding to conceive,
And judgement to discern, I wish to find:
Beyond that, all hazardous I leave;
Learning, and pregnant wit in Woman-Kind,
What it finds malleable, maketh frail,
And doth not add more ballast, but more sail.35

In addition, the good wife should be continually concerned with her domestic duties in order to avoid leisure time which was dangerous for the female sex. She would be discreet in behaviour so as to avoid gossip, and appear, as well as be, chaste.

Overbury's "Wife" was not only widely read, but also imitated by other poets, some of whom were obviously attempting to profit from the success of the work and take advantage of
the scandals and rumours occasioned by the author's mysterious death. In 1614, an unknown author undertook to provide a new husband worthy of Overbury's 'widow', as did John Davies of Hereford in 1616. Although Davies' A select second husband for Sir T. Overburies wif, now a matchless widow purported to describe the qualities of an ideal husband, actually it contained advice about how to manage and control a wife. Women were by nature weak, frail, and full of faults, the poem contended, and it was the husband's duty to provide an example of upright conduct and gently lead his spouse to correct behaviour:

The rib of man, whereof his wife was made
Was crooked: so, though wives be such by kind;
Yet man, of God, in wisdom, learn'd the trade
To bow them straight: then gently them to bind
With cords of love from starting back again,
Till without stubborness, they straight remain.

Unlike most authors, Davies dwelt at considerable length on the physical side of matrimony. The husband was cautioned against lying with his wife all night, every night, for that would make love stale. However, it was his duty to satisfy her sexually whenever she wished:

...for thou must
(So she be true to thee) as often prove
As she desires the sport, though but of lust:
...
And though it be a torment to a man,
(Cold in this kind) to force fire out of ice:
Yet if she would, he should, though ill he can;
Sith sin it is not then to pleasure vice.

While Overbury attributed lust exclusively to the male, Davies
obviously believed that women had stronger sexual desires.

Another work in the Overbury mode was *The description of a good wife: Or A rare one amongst women* (1619) by Richard Brathwaite, who later wrote two very popular handbooks, *The English gentleman* and *The English gentlewoman*. Brathwaite's poem took the form of a dream in which a deceased father appeared to his son and offered him instructions on how to choose a wife and, incidentally, on his husbandly duties. The qualities to be looked for in a wife were entirely predictable: modesty, chastity, obedience, virtue, charity. The son was warned not to marry one of higher status (a common admonition) and to ascertain the characters of the girl's parents to make sure that she had not inherited undesirable traits. As for the material side of matrimony, Brathwaite's shade took a middle position: a sizable portion was very welcome, yet "dear's the portion if thy wife be ill."39 He also advised his son to have an eye on what kind of a mother his prospective wife would be, advice which seems obvious and sensible, but was not usually stated. Above all, the young man, while heeding good counsel, should please himself, for

...in marriage thou thyself must please,
Or every day will be an argument
Of thy succeeding sorrow, then be wise,
Carve for thy self, yet hear thy friends' advice.40

The father's idea of husbandly duties was succinct: command, but don't tyrannize; show your affection only in private; don't keep your wife too short of money or meddle in
domestic affairs; and when you die, don't leave your wife the entire estate, but only a portion. He also recommended that the boy marry one who had freely chosen him, implying that marriage was solely the concern of the individuals involved and not to be arranged by parents or 'friends'.

Another type of literature which was an offshoot of the 'controversy' over women was the discussion of matrimony itself - whether the married or single life was preferable. As with the works previously described, this literature varied in tone and form. Those who inveighed against the wedded state usually repeated the charges against women invoked by the anti-feminists; those who recommended it used the arguments of the clergy or viewed marriage as a means of advancement.

Works which defended matrimony came from the pens of noted Humanists Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Desiderius Erasmus. Agrippa's work, The commendation of matrimony, first published in English in 1534, was a paean to the married state, significant in that the author advocated an unusual degree of equality between spouses. He instructed husbands to

...take thy wife, committed and given to thee forever by the hand of god for thy continual fellowship, not to service and bondage, whom thou oughtest to rule with thy wisdom, with all favour and reverence. And let not her be subject unto thee, but let her be with thee in all trust and counsel, and let her be in thy house, not as a drudge, but as mistress of the house. 41

In two short and entertaining works, Erasmus argued for marriage as opposed to the celibate life which he termed
"barren and unnatural." Yet his words indicate that his view of matrimony did not differ greatly from the chastity he derided: a lover addressing his prospective spouse stated,

As for our marriage it shall rather be a marriage of our minds, than our bodies;...how little shall this matrimony differ from virginity.

Other less noteworthy works which advocated the married life over the single were William Vaughan's *The golden-grove* (1600), Leonard Wright's *A display of dutie* (1589), and Richard Ames' *The Pleasures of Love and Marriage* (1691). Some authors, while recognizing the advantages of matrimony, still found it difficult to give it a whole-hearted endorsement. For example, Edward Waterhouse and William de Britaine advocated marriage primarily as a means to advance the fortunes of great families. Samuel Bufford reflected, "Tis true indeed that not withstanding all...[the] blessings of a married life, yet a single one is much more to be preferred and esteemed beyond that, by reason of the many and vast advantages belonging to it." In a charming work which dealt with the economics of running an estate, Francis Dudley, Baron North, rather startlingly advocated a single life for women:

A single life is the best part, giving a capability of beginning the heavenly joys here on Earth, by an uninterrupted contemplation of the divine excellencies.

Francis Bacon believed that churchmen should be unmarried in order to direct all their charitable impulses to their flock,
but soldiers with wives and children would be less likely to desert. Unmarried men, he stated, made "the best friends, best masters, best servants," but not the best subjects.48

In a similar vein, the anonymous author of *Marriage promoted. In a discourse of its ancient and modern practice* (1690) described the advantages to the commonwealth of a married population. He believed that all men should be obliged to marry at age twenty-one for this would strengthen the kingdom, increase and promote arts and industry, augment the treasury, lessen taxes, prevent disease and promote health, ensure a sober, well-ordered populace, and bring the country into conformity with God's laws. Moreover,

> the neglect of marriage (if not timely prevented) ...[threatened] the destruction of...nations; instanced in the decay of the Roman Empire on this account.49

A humorous piece with a similar point of view was published under the title *The levellers: a dialogue between two young ladies, concerning matrimony; proposing an Act for Enforcing Marriage for the Equality of Matches, and Taxing Single Persons; with the Danger of Celibacy to a Nation.*50 This work was dedicated to a Member of Parliament.

*The guardian's instruction* (1688), although not an anti-marriage tract, listed reasons why marriage was despised by many: the influence of the devil which caused wild libertinism in men; contemporary examples of lewd behavior; the idea that matrimony was a slavish confinement; that women were
governing their husbands; that the ancient and modern writers inveighed against marriage; that children were forced into wedlock without their consent with disastrous consequences; that mothers-in-law talked too much and wives railed; and "the easy cure of the French compliment."  

Works condemning marriage used the arguments about woman's evil nature supported by the oft-cited examples from Scripture and the classics. A discourse of the married and single Life (1621) concluded with a chapter on women who had murdered their husbands; Bufford noted that some women, in order to "ease the dear sweet husbands of their many cares and troubles of this present world, do sometimes give them a gentle push into the next." Thomas Heywood's A curtaine lecture (1637) contained dialogues between husbands and wives of various social classes; all reflected discordant marital relations. A letter by a Mr. Strattford printed in a work entitled The challenge...or the female war (1697) presented an exceptionally bleak view of married life. The author accused women of presenting themselves in an attractive light only until the knot was tied, after which they let their true natures show:

In short, all the care you took to disguise your minds and bodies, all your intellectual toppings and washes, as well as the gayety and judgement, wit and good humour of your outward dress have perfectly vanished. We have you in your native homeliness, though not innocence: if you have not too contracted some additional countercharms, and add sluttishness to your other accomplishments, to make you more completely odious.
His description of the married existence of the poorer classes was especially squalid:

And when once want comes in at one window, out creeps love infallibly at another, especially when the brats begin to sprawl and stink about in every corner, yelping for the dug, with scarce clothes enough to hide their nastiness. 55

Works of the 'controversial' sort were written by men; with their excessive commendations or energetic denunciations of women and marriage, their portraits of the saintly wife or bitter shrew, they seem to have been intended primarily for a male audience. However, during this period there were works written specifically for women. These treatises, fairly rare in the Tudor period, but increasingly common during the following century, differed from the courtesy literature or advice books directed to men. Ruth Kelso sums up the difference:

Occupations which filled books especially addressed to gentlemen encompassed government, war, the learned professions, agriculture, and commerce; but for women only one occupation was recommended - housewifery. Education for the gentleman was a wide-flung subject, involving all that was called liberal and drawing on the best pedagogical advice of the time. Education for the lady looked to her proficiency in domestic affairs and what in moral and religious training would keep her safely concerned only with them. 56

The most popular work addressed to women during the sixteenth century was by Joannes Vives. The Latin version was first published in 1523 under the title De Institutione
Foeminae Christianae; an English translation, Instructions of a Christian Woman, appeared in 1540 and was reprinted more than seven times before the turn of the century. 'Instructions' in this case was not used in the educational sense; the female was to be instructed in becoming simply a good Christian wife.

Vives used the three-part classification - maid, wife, widow - to define a woman's life. He believed that the choice of a husband should be entirely in the hands of the girl's parents, who were to select him on the basis of character, not riches, birth or looks. However, the match was to be arranged at the man's instigation; that is, he was actively to seek his bride. Her parents were not to offer her around nor compel her to marry against her wishes. Vives' writings reflected a rather curious double standard concerning the role of love in marriage. The man was to "desire [the woman] with all his heart," yet she was not to love before marriage, as that would indicate a light and unstable personality. After the wedding, however, the wife was expected to feel and display great love toward her spouse, as well, of course, as obey him in all things. Vives believed that conjugal relations were only for the purpose of procreation and the man's pleasure; a chaste wife would, herself, derive satisfaction only from her husband's enjoyment. Other wifely duties included keeping a well-regulated home, raising children, and telling tales which would "refresh her husband and make him merry" à la Scheherazade.

Advice books directed toward women became increasingly
popular during the seventeenth century, and, although most of them discussed marriage, they differed in emphasis and in their target audience. Gervase Markham's *The English house-wife* was aimed at the middle-class woman. First published in 1611 and into its eleventh edition by 1675, it presented a rather daunting portrait of its title character ("of chaste thoughts, staunch courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good Neighbour-hood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein") as well as an even more impressive list of her skills:

As her skill in Physic, Chirurgury, Cookery, Extraction of Oils, Banqueting Stuff, Ordering of great feasts, Preserving of all sort of Wines, conceited secrets, Distillations, Perfumes, Ordering of Wool, Hemp, Flax: Making Cloth and Dying; the Knowledge of Dairies; Office of Malting; of Oats... Of Brewing, Baking, and all other things belonging to a Household.

Markhan's most severe condemnation was of the wife who couldn't cook:

The first and most principal thing is a perfect skill and knowledge of cookery...and she that is utterly ignorant therein may not by laws of strict justice challenge the freedom of marriage, because indeed she can then but perform half her vow: for she may live and obey but she cannot cherish, serve and keep with that true duty which is ever expected.

Richard Brathwaite, on the other hand, obviously appealed to a reader of higher status; his work, *The English gentlewoman* (1631), covered such topics as apparel, behaviour, decency, gentility, honour, and fancy. As did many other authors, he
adamantly asserted the necessity of similarity of condition, wealth, and age between husband and wife:

Disparity in descent, fortunes, friends, with other like respects many times beget distraction of mind... which effects are usually produced, when either disparity of years breed dislike; or obscurity of descent begets contempt; or inequality of fortunes, discontent. 64

As had Vives, Brathwaite counselled the woman not to love her husband until after marriage, but his advice about what he termed "fancy" is rather confusing. He believed that the "weaker sex" was more prone to concupiscence, what he termed "wanton fancy" or "wandering frenzy", and advocated "incessant devotion" to cure this "desperate malady." 65 These appear to be the words of a man convinced that the female had a voracious sexual appetite; yet, a few pages later, he condemned those who were too "cool" to their intended husbands and instructed them in how to increase their ardour. 66

Poet and courtier Patrick Hannay also directed marital advice to upper class women in a work written in the Overbury mode entitled A happy husband; Or directions for a maide to choose her mate 67 which was published in 1619. Since most unmarried women of rank had a very limited voice in choosing their husbands, one wonders whether this advice was intended to be practical, or whether its composition was simply an intellectual exercise. Hannay's first admonition to the husband-hunting female was to choose a man of equal birth in order to maintain the status to which she was born. 68 She was
to consider the characters of his parents for, "From poisoned spring no wholesome waters flow." The author strongly warned against marrying a deformed person, since an outward blemish was indicative of an inward flaw: "For she [Nature] doth builder-like a mansion frame,/ Fit for the guest, should harbour in the same." The prospective bride was to look for a man of established and well-deserved reputation some years older than herself. She was warned against men who gambled or drank heavily and those who were licentious, faithless, and jealous. The ideal husband was one who feared God and displayed the virtues of prudence, courage, justice, and temperance.

After listing the qualities which a woman was to look for in a mate, Hannay described how the good wife should behave after marriage. The wife's primary duty was obedience to her husband's wishes. This advice was, of course, far from unique, but the author's rationale for obedience differed from that of most other counsellors. A wife was to bow to her husband's will because he was the superior in the partnership, but also because, in so doing, she was more likely to attain her own desires. Hannay told the wife "to win him with mildness" and used the metaphor of a rider with an uncontrolled horse: "The whip and lash the angry horse enrages,/ Mild voice and gentle stroke his ire assuages." It is interesting that, in this instance, the wife was equated with the rider, the one who was in control, and the husband with the beast that was to be dominated. The Protestant preachers used the same metaphor,
but with the positions reversed. The wife was further admonished not to be too fond of her husband; the ideal relationship was one of affection and "staid respect." She must maintain a cheerful face even if ill fortune befell them, not be too curious or suspicious about her spouse's doings, take charge of all domestic affairs, and not indulge in gossip or loose conversation.

Also inspired by Overbury's work was a collection of characters called *Picturae loquentes* by Wye Saltonstall which was published in 1631 and again in 1635. It contained a poem entitled "A Mayde" which followed the organizational pattern of the "Wife" and included advice to the young woman about how to choose her spouse. She was not to let love or wealth induce her to match with an aged lover or an underage heir, but to pick a husband just a few years older than she, "...for tis ever/ Observ'd that they do always best agree,/ Who have spent their youth and age together." The author spoke against forced marriages and believed that sympathetic natures and mutual liking provided a sound basis for matrimony.

A popular work which reflected a religious viewpoint was *The ladies calling* (1673) by Richard Allestree. After listing the qualities of a good Christian woman (modesty, meekness, compassion, affability, piety) Allestree categorized the duties of a wife under three headings: those due to the husband's person, his reputation, and his fortune. Under the first heading the wife owed her spouse love, fidelity, and obedience. She was to protect his reputation by not
broadcasting his faults or behaving in such a manner as to reflect badly on him, and to protect his fortune by being frugal and not spending his money on luxurious apparel.

What is unusual in Allestree's work is his unabashed support of the 'double standard'. After warning wives against jealousy he observed:

But perhaps it may be said that some are not left to their jealousy and conjectures; but have more demonstrative proofs. In this age 'tis indeed no strange thing for men to publish their sin...and the offender does sometimes not discover but boast his crime. In this case I confess 'twill be scarce possible to disbelieve him; but even here a wife has this advantage, that she is out of the pain of suspense; she knows the utmost, and therefore is now at leisure to convert all that industry which she would have used for the discovery, to fortify her self against a known calamity; which sure she may as well do in this as in any other; a patient submission being the one Catholicon (?) in all distresses; they are therefore far in the wrong who in case of this injury pursue their husbands with virulencies and reproaches.

However, when he discussed a wife's possible infidelity he flatly stated, "Adultery was by God's own award punished with death among the Jews,...and I know no reason,...that should any where give it a milder sentence." Earlier religious works had almost unanimously condemned adultery in either sex; Allestree's opinions may be a reflection of the looser moral standards of the Restoration period.

Some authors seemed to use the advice book primarily as a means to denounce women who behaved in unacceptable ways. Robert Codrington offered conventional wisdom about obedience and patience in marriage as well as a "scathing denunciation"
of idle wives who wasted their husbands' goods, spent their time in idle diversions, and adorned themselves with paint, patches, and tight clothing. The anonymous author of *Several discourses and characters address'ed to the ladies of the age* (1689?) railed against wives who attempted to govern their husbands as well as those who indulged in scandalous gossip and "the frivolity of French frippery." The *ladies dictionary* (1694), a lengthy work which contained advice about apparel, behaviour, and cooking as well as matrimony, praised the 'good' wife while castigating the greedy, wicked one:

> [she] will do but what pleases her even in his prosperous days; and when a cloud over-shadows, she leaves him comfortless, in darkness and misery; she sucks him indeed whilst he has any blood of substance left, like a horse-leech, always craving, but never satisfied, displeased at every thing he does, if he grants not all her desires, and they very unreasonable ones;...she regards not his growing ruin or miseries, but rather pushes him into them....

While male authors were 'debating' the merits of women and marriage or advising them on how to become good wives - at the same time deploring those who did not conform to the ideal - a few exceptional females were themselves setting down their thoughts about marriage and woman's role in society. As Patricia Crawford notes, "Women were aware of the bonds of marriage in a way they knew men were not...." While some of these works expressed conventional, acceptable opinions, others differed radically in tone and viewpoint from those written by men.
Two treatises which contained unexceptional advice concerning marriage were *The mothers blessing* (1616) by Dorothy Leigh and *The gentlewoman's companion* (1673) by Hannah Wolley. Leigh's work enjoyed great popularity during the seventeenth century, which is somewhat surprising since it is so commonplace. The marital advice she gave to her sons was to wed godly, virtuous women whom they loved. She also emphasized that a wife was not to be treated as a servant and a drudge, but rather as a "fellow." 

Hannah Wolley, one of the better-known female authors of the seventeenth century, wrote at least six books which treated domestic matters. In *The gentlewoman's companion* she expressed her views on how a woman could marry well and maintain a happy union. Her advice intimated that a woman had a degree of choice of her prospective partner; indeed, her emphasis on caution, discretion, and judgement before deciding on a mate seems to indicate that young women were making hasty marriages based on "misguided fancy."

Look well before you like; love conceived at first sight seldom lasts long, therefore deliberate with your love, lest your love be misguided; for to love at first look makes a house of misrule.

Neither portion nor proportion was to be the main consideration; the bride was to choose one whom she could esteem for his virtues. As did male advisors, Wolley argued that inequality in age, social standing, or fortune boded ill for the union. Above all, she admonished her readers,
Whatever you do, be not induced to marry if you have either abhorrenency or loathing to; for it is neither affluence of estate, potency of friends, nor highness of descent can allay the insufferable grief of a loathed bed. 

The author's statements concerning wives' duties echoed those expressed from the pulpit but without the religious context. "Undoubtedly," she wrote, "the husband hath power over the wife, and the wife ought to be subject to the husband in all things." Further, the good wife would hold her husband in the highest esteem; be quiet, pleasant, and peaceable with him; keep his house in good order; show respect and kindness to his friends and relations; not listen to "distracting" stories about him; educate "his" children and teach them to obey him; and manage money carefully. As befits one who was famous for her cookbooks, Wolley emphasized the importance of keeping a man well and promptly fed:

Let him not wait for his meals, lest by so staying his affairs be disorder'd and impeded. And let what you provide be so neatly and cleanly drest, that his fare, though ordinary, may engage his appetite, and disengage his fancy from taverns, which many are compell'd to make use of by reason of the continual and daily dissatisfactions they find at home.

Many of the works written by women which expressed views on matrimony were responses to the 'controversialists' who defamed women. Two such pieces were answers to Swetnam's Arraignment. Ester hath hang'd Haman (1617) contained an introductory letter to the youths of London which cautioned,
"There can be no love betwixt man and wife, but where there is a respective estimate the one towards the other." Further, the author held men responsible for most problems in a marriage and indicted them for being "drunkards, lechers, and prodigal spendthrifts." The author of *A mouzell for Melastomus* (1617) condemned Swetnam's work as a "palpable blasphemy, wrestling and perverting every place of Scripture," and defended women and marriage with words and examples from the Old and New Testaments. A wife was not her husband's vassal, she wrote, but his "collateral companion"; however, since the husband was obviously the dominant partner, it was his responsibility to set the woman on the right path through "mild persuasions" if she happened to "tread awry."

A work entitled *The women's sharpe revenge; or an answer to Sir Seldome Sober* was published in 1640 in response to John Taylor's *Juniper and Crabtree* lectures. The authors called themselves Mary Tattlewell and Joan Hit-him-home. This lengthy work (over 200 pages) was sharply and cleverly written and used both Biblical and classical examples to defend the worth of women. The authors' view of marriage was, on the whole, rather negative; they stated that the desire for children was the only reason that most women had anything to do with men. Their defence of wives included a rousing denunciation of husbands:

Some do accuse us to be much given to lying; indeed I must confess it to be fault in the most of the best wives: yet I would have our detractor to know that every excuse is not a lie, or if it be, then are most husbands beholding to their wives for excusing them
too often to save their credits: for alas (poor wretches) we are fain to hide and cover their faults and imperfections with our poor excuses, as for example; if one of them be cruel, crabbed, and curish, that he will snap, snarl, and bite with dogged language and conditions, then the poor woman (like a fool) reports him to be a kind, loving, and affectionate husband, ergo she lies; another knows her husband to be a wicked whore-hunter and that he doth (in a manner) keep a trull or two under her nose; yet she will say her husband is a very honest man: ergo she lies too. A third spends most of his time in drinking or gaming and his poor wife is so kind, as to acknowledge him for a good, painful, sober and civil husband, and I am sure she lies abominable (sic). I could insist further into such particulars, but these are sufficient to show that the most part of women being liars, is only out of their goodness to cover the faults and abuses of wicked men. 93

Other women also expressed distaste for marriage: poet Jane Barker preferred the single life, 94 as did the author of The female advocate (1686); 95 Jane Owen enjoyed widowhood when "your states are in your own disposal"; 96 Damaris Masham expressed the opinion that worthy women who were married to wicked men should not "foolishly sacrifice their lives, or the comforts of them...to those who will not sacrifice the least inclination to their reasonable satisfaction," 97 but should turn their interests toward their children and their studies; and Anne, Countess of Winchilsea, wrote:

Free as Nature's first intention
Was to make us, I'll be found
Nor by subtle Man's invention
Yield to be in fetters bound
By one that walks a freer round.
Marriage does but slightly tie Men
Whils't close Pris'ners we remain. 98

One of the most reasoned and articulate, albeit bitter,
refutations of a diatribe against women was Lady Mary Chudleigh's *The female preacher* (1699?) written in response to a sermon by John Sprint. Lady Chudleigh used political arguments and language in her defense, appealing to "liberty, reason, and common-sense." To the minister's contention that women must not only be subject to their husbands, but must be so cheerfully and willingly, she responded,

This is tyranny, I think, that extends farther than the most absolute monarchs of the world; for if they can but fill their galleys with slaves and chain them fast to their oar, they seldom have so large a conscience to expect they should take any great pleasure in their present condition, and that the very desires of their hearts should strike an harmony with the clattering music of their fetters.100

She criticized the idea that a woman's salvation was entirely dependent on submission with the statement,

...there needs no further torment for a woman, than only being obliged, on pain of damnation, to bring under her very desires to the unaccountable humours of a wild and giddy fop, who becomes more insolent by submission, and grows more intolerable by being born with.101

She added that she did not wish to quarrel with church doctrine, but noted that the compilers of the liturgy were men and "by consequence would not omit (sic) the binding of our sex as fast as possible."102

The most acrimonious denunciations of woman's lot in marriage were written by Mary Astell.103 The first proponent of higher education for women,104 Astell expressed her views on matrimony in two works - *Six familiar essays* (1696) and *Some
reflections upon marriage (1700). A devout High Church Anglican, she attempted, unsuccessfully, to reconcile her own bitterness and repugnance at the inferior status accorded to women in marriage with the teachings of the Church which countenanced this subjugation.

The first section of Six familiar essays was written in the form of a letter from one woman to another on the occasion of the recipient's marital difficulties. Astell (or the letter-writer) counselled her friend that she must put up with her husband's infidelities since "...we take them for better or worse; and experience shows us, that the odds are on the worse side." She continued:

...he [God] has told us that sufficient to the day is evil thereof, and really I believe very few married women, find any one day without evil enough, to exercise their patience with, for as soon as honeymoon is over the blades begin to show us, that though they have deified us hitherto, yet they thought us no better than poor silly mortals all the while, whom they flatter only to oppress us.

In Some reflections upon marriage, Astell castigated those men who married for fortune, beauty, wit, or love, which she regarded as being extravagant and temporal. Friendship, she claimed, was the only basis on which to choose one's bride. Of the woman's role in selecting a husband, she wrote, "A woman indeed can't properly be said to choose, all that is allow'd her, is to refuse or accept what is offered." A similar statement was made by the author of An essay in defense of the female sex (1696): "Thus are we debarred the liberty of
choosing for our selves and confined to please our selves out of the number that like and address us."\textsuperscript{110}

Marriage, according to Astell, was a total disaster for women. Men did not want true companionship, but rather an efficient housekeeper, a good breeder, and a dutiful helper who would

sooth his pride and flatter his vanity...conclude him in the right, when others are so ignorant, or so rude as to deny it....In a word, one whom he can entirely govern, and consequently may form her to his will and liking, who must be his of life, and therefore cannot quit his service let him treat her how he will.\textsuperscript{111}

As had the preachers, Astell used political metaphors to describe matrimony; yet rather than a "well-ordered commonwealth," marriage was, in her view, a "private tyranny" in which women were "slaves."\textsuperscript{112} In the preface to the edition of 1700, she specifically referred to contemporary political debates by posing the questions, "If all men are born free, how is it all women are born slaves? as they must be if the being subjected to the unconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of men, be the perfect condition of slavery?" and "If absolute sovereignty be not necessary in a state, how comes it to be so in a family?"\textsuperscript{113}

The negative, indeed hostile, view which many of these educated, articulate women expressed concerning marriage was summed up by Lady Chudleigh:

Wife and Servant are the same,
But only differ in the Name:
For when that fatal Knot is tied,
Which nothing, nothing can divide:
When she the word obey has said,
And Man by Law supreme has made,
Then all that's kind is laid aside,
And nothing left but State and Pride:
Fierce as an Eastern Prince he grows,
And all his innate Rigor shows:
Then but to look, to laugh, or speak,
Will the Nuptial Contract break.
Like Mutes she Signs alone must make,
And never any Freedom take:
But still be govern'd by a Nod,
And fear her Husband as her God:
Him still must serve, Him still obey,
And nothing act, and nothing say,
But what her haughty Lord thinks fit,
Who with the Pow'r, has all the Wit.
Then shun, oh! shun that wretched State,
And all the fawning Platter's hate:
Value yourselves, and Men despise,
You must be proud, if you'll be wise.

Even from this brief survey of very specific types of literature, it is clear that views about women and marriage were changing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The debates about woman, which, in early Tudor times, had been charming and witty intellectual exercises among courtiers and scholars, became, in the succeeding century, acrimonious contests in which men bitterly railed against women who, with equal bitterness but, in most cases, more logic, defended themselves and turned the tables on their attackers. The question of the necessity of marriage came under discussion, not only for men, for whom a single life was a viable alternative, but for women, for whom, in most cases, it was not. And poets and essayists endlessly extolled the 'good wife' in verse and prose.

This 'good wife' was, of course, identical to the one in the Protestant marriage manuals; the qualities which the
preachers had praised in a religious context were taken up by popular writers. Any female whose behavior deviated from the ideal was condemned or ridiculed: she was portrayed as a shrew, a harlot, or a "mannyish woman." The stereotypical view of women which runs so consistently through seventeenth-century literature seems to be an attempt to prescribe a very limited social role for women; they were not to be involved in matters of public importance, but to confine themselves exclusively to the private, domestic sphere. Indeed, as individuals, they scarcely existed at all; their identity consisted in being wives, mothers, and "passive exemplars of virtue." It was against this rigid definition of woman that the feminist authors reacted so bitterly: a man was, after all, a man and could be many other things besides; a woman, however, was only a wife.
Examples of courtesy books which contained marital advice are: The English gentleman by Richard Brathwaite, first published in 1630 and again in 1633 and 1641; Enchiridion miscellaneum by Francis Quarles and A. Warwick, first published in 1640 and at least fourteen times subsequently; The gentlemans companion: or A character of true nobility and gentility by William Ramesay, published in 1672 and 1676; A discourse of civil life by Lodowick Bryskett, printed twice in 1606; and The gentlemans monitor by Edward Waterhouse, published in 1665.

Some Monographs on marriage are: A discourse of marriage and wiving by Alexander Niccholes, published in 1615 and 1620; Conjugium conjurium: or Some serious considerations on marriage by William Ramesay, first published in 1673 and again in 1674, 1675 and 1684; The court of good counsell (1607); and The batcheleor's directory which was printed in 1694 and 1696. The marital advice contained in these works was, on the whole, very conventional and similar to that described in the previous chapters.


Two of the more influential works by foreigners were A treatise of the nobility of woman kynde by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa which appeared in translation in 1542 and Baldassare Castiglione's The Courtyer, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby and published in 1561, the third book of which argued the case for and against female inferiority.

Utley's index lists 403 works by native authors which were published before 1569.

Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance, 44. The notion that the 'controversy' was a literary exercise is
confirmed by the fact that several authors wrote both attacks and defenses. For example, Edward Gosynhill condemned women in *The Scole house of women* (1542) and acclaimed them in *The prayse of all women, called Mulieru pean* (1542?), as did Barnaby Rich in *Faultes faultes, and nothing else but faultes* (1606) and *The excellency of good women* (1613). Some works contained both sides of the argument, such as Robert Vaughan's *A dyalogue defensyve for women, agaynst malcyous detractours* (1542) and Ercole Tasso's *Of marriage and wiving* (1599).

Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance*, 133.

This reference is to the woman described in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, to whom the defenders of women almost always alluded.

Ruth Kelso, with great insight, points out that the qualities assigned to women during this period - chastity, humility, piety, patience - were essentially Christian; those attributed to men - justice, prudence, courtesy, liberality, temperance, courage - pagan. Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady*, 36.

Sir Thomas Elyot, *The defence of good women* (1545), sig. Diii.

Edward Gosynhill, *The prayse of all women, called Mulieru pean* (1542?), sig. Eiii.


Swetnam's work was published twice in 1615, and again in 1616, 1617, 1619, 1622, 1628, 1629, 1634, and 1637.

Katharine M. Rogers notes that those authors who pretend to condemn only evil females "frequently draw so blurry a line between bad women and all women that the reader can hardly be expected to see it." Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 64.

Woodbridge charges, "Swetnam has plundered the formal controversy, carrying off an unsorted booty of the controversy's conventions, arguments, authorities, jests, and exempla, along with miscellaneous shards of misogyny snapped up from non-formal literature; but he neither respects nor understands the genre." Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance*, 87.


Although the author's invectives against lewd women, exhortations to eschew lust, and use of Biblical examples of wicked women are reminiscent of the more extreme type of religious zealot, The arraignment is almost entirely devoid of religious content.

Swetnam, Arraignment, 15.
Ibid., 16.
Ibid., 36.
Ibid., 53.

Woodbridge accurately observes, "Whatever else one can say apropos the relative merits of anti-feminist attacks and pro-feminist defences, the attacks were certainly more fun." Women and the English Renaissance, 109.

Daniel Tuvil, Asylum veneris, or a sanctuary for ladies (1616), 149.
Ibid., 153.

The last response to Swetnam was a play entitled Swetnam, the woman-hater, arraigned by women (1620) in which the author was punished for his misogynist views. Coryl Crandall, the most recent editor of this work, contends that the play, which portrays women and men as being neither wholly good nor bad, may have reflected popular attitudes more closely that did The arraignment. Coryl Crandall (ed.), Swetnam the Woman-Hater: The Controversy and the Play (Purdue University Studies, 1969), Introduction.

Thomas Fuller, The holy [and profane] state, 4th ed. (1663), 207-209. This work was first published in 1642.
Nicholas Breton, Pasquils mistresse: Or the worthie and unworthie woman (1600), sigg. E-E4.
Nicholas Breton, "The Goode and the Badd," The Works in Verse and Prose of Nicholas Breton (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), vol. 2, 12. This work was originally published in 1616.
Richard Graham, Viscount Preston, Angliae speculum morale (1670), 92.
John Taylor, A juniper Lecture, 2nd impression (1639), 94.
According to Ben Jonson, Overbury composed the poem in 1611 in order to impress and seduce Sir Philip Sidney's daughter, the Countess of Rutland. (As far as we know, he failed.) Later, he used the work in attempting to dissuade Sir Robert Carr, over whom he had considerable influence, from making his married mistress, Frances, Countess of Essex, his wife. In this too he failed: the Essex divorce case was the sensation of 1613. Overbury was confined to the Tower, presumably so that he would not obstruct the proceedings and shortly afterward, died of poisoning. Robert Carr and his new wife Frances were convicted of the murder and sentenced to death, a sentence which was commuted by the King. For a more detailed explanation of the Overbury case and a history of the publication of "A Wife", see the introduction of The "Conceited Newes" of Sir Thomas Overbury and his friends (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimile and Reprints, 1968), xiii-xxiii.

Only one copy of this work exists. It is not listed in The Short Title Catalogue. Ben Jonson wrote a verse commending it. See "To the Worthy Author of The Husband" in Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems, George Parfett (ed.) Penguin edition, 260.

John Davies, A select second husband for Sir T. Overburies wif, now a matchless widow (1616), 9.


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Desiderius Erasmus, Modest means to marriage pleasantly set fourth (1568), no pagination.


William de Britaine, Humane prudence, or the art by which a man may raise himself and fortune to grandeur 5th ed. (1689), 229-240.

Samuel Bufford, A discourse against unequal marriages (1696), 7.
Francis Dudley, Baron North, Observations and advices oeconomical (1669), 21. This is reminiscent of the Catholic position in preferring the religious life over the secular. Also, it sounds like observations made by women which are discussed below.

Francis Bacon, "Of Marriage and Single Life," The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, ed. by John M. Robertson (London: George Routledge and Sons Limited, 1905), 743. Richard Baxter, noted Presbyterian divine, also advocated a single life for the clergy for reasons similar to Bacon's, although he, himself, failed to live up to his beliefs.

Marriage promoted. In a discourse of its ancient and modern practice (1690), 31-50.

The levellers as printed in The Harleian Miscellany, vol. 5 (1810), 444-460.

[Stephen Penton], The guardian's instruction (1688), 26-30.

A discourse of the married and single life (1621), Table of Contents.

Bufford, A discourse, 31.

[John Dunton], The challenge sent by a young lady to Sir Thomas etc. Or, the female war (1697), 27.

Ibid., 26.

Kelso, Doctrine, 3.


Ibid., 61.

Ibid., 65.

Gervase Markham, The English house-wife, containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a compleat woman (1683), 2.

Ibid., title page.

Ibid., 49.

First published in 1631, this work was reprinted in 1641 as a companion piece to The English gentleman.

Richard Brathwaite, The English gentlewoman (1631), 132.

Ibid., 141.
The wife, of course, assumed the same social status as her husband. Thus, a woman who married a man of lesser degree went 'down' the social scale; one who married a man of greater status went 'up'. Men were often warned not to marry a wife who was 'above' them as she would be proud and not respect her husband as she ought; probably such a woman would also resent her loss of status, particularly if she had been coerced into marriage for financial gain or reasons of expediency.

Throughout A happy husband Hannay illustrated his precepts with examples taken from Biblical and classical stories; however, in this case he borrowed from Sir Thomas More and cited the case of Richard III to suggest that a marked body was a sign of a warped nature.

Wye Saltonstall, Picturae loquentes; or pictures drawne forth in characters (1631), 13.

First published in 1673, The ladies calling had been reprinted eight times by 1700.


Ibid., 32.

Robert Codrington, Decency in conversation amongst women (1664) as cited in Mason, Gentlefolk, 169.

Several discourses and character address'd to the ladies of the age. Wherein the vanities of the modish women are discovered (1689?) as cited by Mason, Gentlefolk 172-3.

The ladies dictionary (1694), 345.

For a complete bibliography of books by women authors published during the seventeenth century see "Women's published writings, 1600-1700" by Patricia Crawford in Women in English Society, 1500-1800, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1984), 211-282.


Leigh's work went through twenty editions within a century of publication.
81 Dorothy Leigh, The mothers blessing, 10th ed. (1627), 54.


83 The gentlewoman's companion was first published in 1673 and was reprinted twice after that. Other works by Wolley went through as many as seven reprints.

84 Hannah Wolley, The gentlewoman's companion (1673), 188.

85 Wolley's work was written for the middle classes; young girls of this station probably had more opportunity to make hasty matches than did those of the upper classes.

86 Wolley, Companion, 89.

87 Ibid., 104.

88 Ibid., 105-107.

89 Ibid., 106. This direction provides the student of social history with insight concerning why men during this period frequented taverns.

90 Ester Sowernam, Ester hath hang'd Haman: or an answere to a lewde pamphlet entituled the Arraignment of Women (1617), 44.

91 Rachel Speght, A mouzell for Malastomus, the cynicall bayer of and foule mouthed barker against Eva's sex (1617), 15.

92 Mary Tattlewell and Joan Hit-him-home, The women's sharpe revenge; or an answer to Sir Seldome Sober (1640), 133-34. For a comparison of this work with the writings of Mary Astell, see "From 'Goodwife' to 'Mistress': The Transformation of the Female in Bourgeois Culture," by Margaret George in Science and Society 37 (1973): 152-177.

93 Tattlewell and Hit-him-home, The women's...revenge, 60.

94 See Crawford, "Women's Published Writings," 226.

95 S.F., The female advocate (1686), 10-11. There is some confusion about the authorship of this work. Mary Chudleigh's The female preacher was originally published under this title and some scholars attribute to to her; however, the works are
entirely dissimilar in form, content and tone and were obviously written by different women.

96 See Crawford, "Women's Published Writings," 226.

97 As quoted in Wallas, Bluestocking, 104. Masham was a well-known intellectual of her day. For discussions of her life and works, see Wallas, 75-107, and Stenton, The English Woman, 219-220.

98 As quoted in Smith, Reason's Disciples, 162. For discussions of Countess Winchilsea's life and works, see Smith, 158-162, and Fraser, Weaker Vessel, 388-90.

99 Mary Chudleigh (Lady), The female preacher. Being an answer to a late rude and scandalous wedding-sermon preach'd by Mr. John Sprint (1699?), 13.

100 Ibid., 12.
101 Ibid., 15.
102 Ibid.

103 For discussions of Mary Astell's life and works see the following: Stenton, The English Woman, 220-225; Wallas, Bluestocking, 111-130; Fraser, Vessel, 373-5; Smith, Reason's Disciple, 117-39; George, "From Goodwife to Mistress," 152-177.

104 Astell's A serious proposal for the ladies advocated the establishment of a college of higher education for women.

105 Six familiar essays was published only once, but Some reflections upon marriage went into its third edition.

106 Mary Astell, Six familiar essays upon marriage, crosses in love, sickness, death, loyalty, and friendship (1696), 2.

107 Ibid., 17.

108 Mary Astell, Some reflections upon marriage 3rd ed. (1706), 9.

109 Ibid., 22.

110 An essay in defence of the female sex (1696), 131. The authorship of this is in doubt; some scholars attribute it to Astell, but the style is completely different.

111 Astell, Some reflections, 35.

112 Ibid., 27.

113 Ibid., 1700 ed., preface.

CONCLUSION

Marital advice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was remarkably similar in content, but differed in form, purpose, and significance. The advisory letters, which were written for the most part, by and for elites, focused almost exclusively on how a young man could make a wise and judicial selection of a bride. This implies that the decision of whom to marry was within the province of the youth himself. External evidence indicates that such was not the case; documents attest to the fact that, for those of high status, matrimony was a serious affair involving extensive negotiations usually conducted by the parents of the prospective bride and groom. Few young aristocrats would have risked their future financial and social well-being by making a match which had not been expressly countenanced by those who had power over them. Therefore, the implication that the youth was free to choose his own spouse is fictive.

Internal evidence supports this: the letters contain no reference to the necessity of the consent of both sets of parents to the match, which was strongly insisted upon by the clerical counsellors. The inference must surely be that the older generations had been involved in the match-making process from the first. That none of the works mention courtship or indicate that once a maid was chosen, she had yet to be won, confirms that marital arrangements were not necessarily conducted by the principals.
This is not to argue that the groom had little or no input into the decision of whom he would marry. Lawrence Stone suggests that, during this period, a transition was occurring in the arrangement of elite marriages and describes four successive phases:

In the first, marriage was arranged by parents with relatively little reference to the wishes of the children; in the second, parents continued to arrange the marriage but granted the children the right of veto; in the third, the children made the choice but the parents retained the power of veto; in the fourth, which was only reached in this century, the children arrange their own marriages with little open reference to...their parents. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, England passed from the first to the second of these phases, while by the end of the latter century some writers had moved from the second to the third position.

Stone's theory may well be correct. Evidence suggests that individual families varied in the degree of latitude that they allowed their children in their choice of spouses. However, I would dispute Stone's contention on two points: firstly, his use of the word "writers" suggests that he is basing his assumption on literary sources, presumably the letters of advice on which he relies so heavily. These letters are not indicative of what the letter-writers were actually doing. One may use them as evidence of what people were saying or, perhaps, of what they believed, but not of their actions. Speech and action are not, after all, necessarily consistent. Secondly, it is not legitimate to include sons and daughters under the heading of "children" and make general statements concerning their role, or lack of it, in arranging their
marriages. The sources indicate that sons and daughters were treated very differently in this matter.

It would appear, then, that the writers of these letters were offering specious advice at best; they were counselling their sons on how to select a wife when, in many cases, the youths had little or nothing to say about whom they wed. Perhaps one can gain insight into the motives of the letter-writers by examining the epistles in a different context. The vogue for advisory letters can be traced back to the popularity of Burghley's and King James' letters; offering wise counsel to your son became the customary thing to do. Elites of our day publish their memoirs; those of the seventeenth century wrote letters of advice. While some of the recommendations reflected the counsellor's experience and values, others were conventional wisdom often plagiarized from another source. The letters were not, in any sense, personal; the advice they contained was similar to that printed in courtesy and conduct books. Their essentially literary nature can be evinced by the fact that they were often written on 'significant' occasions, such as the father's imprisonment, the son's leaving for a trip abroad, etc. Before giving too much credence to the advice contained in these letters, the scholar should remember that Laertes no doubt ignored the admonitions of his father and that Polonius' "To thine own self be true" was essentially hypocritical.

The clerical counsellors provided the fullest explication
of matrimony and were the only advisors that dealt, to any significant extent, with its post-nuptial aspect. Their purpose was propagandist: they were attempting to establish the middle-class family as a bastion of the Protestant faith. Their writings provided a model of the ideal domestic situation: wise and pious father judiciously governing his obedient, submissive wife, his dutiful, biddable children, his orderly, prosperous household.

Common sense tells us that this state was rarely attained; we can probably more accurately deduce what was occurring in middle-class homes by reversing the advice. Preachers sternly admonished children not to marry without parental consent; a significant number may have been doing so. It is logical to assume that those who were less financially and socially dependent on their parents would be less likely to obey them in matrimonial matters. The clerics cited Scriptural authority to prove how wrong it was for husbands to beat their wives; this seems to indicate that not only were husbands beating, but that wives were complaining. And, the continual insistence on wifely subservience and meekness leads one to suspect that many wives were anything but. It is tempting to believe that people of the past behaved much like people of today when they receive advice: if they think it irrelevant, they ignore it; if they think it valid, a few try to emulate the worthy models, more feel guilty that they cannot live up to such high ideals, most smugly congratulate themselves for being the paragon that is described.
Because the sources discussed in the third chapter are a potpourri of different literary genres, it is difficult to make generalizations about them. Whereas the letters were written for purposes of status, the marriage manuals for propaganda, and works of such serious scholars as Vives, Erasmus, and Agrippa for edification, much of this literature was written for entertainment and, ultimately, profit. The marital counsel contained in them is conventional or clever, traditional or cynical and largely derivative. One interesting aspect of these works is the way in which many authors lifted the 'good wife' from her religious context and inserted her into what were essentially popular diversions. Whereas she appears very much at home in the pious, bourgeois world of the Protestant preachers, she seems rather out-of-place in the Overbury circle. Literature which dealt with marriage was becoming more conventional in its depiction of women.

The reverse side of this phenomenon was the vilification of woman. The misogynist pose appears to have become increasingly common during the seventeenth century. The feminist reaction, however, cannot be directly attributed to this. The changing intellectual, social and political climate seems to have encouraged a few exceptional women to attack, not only those who castigated women, but the institution of marriage itself.

Advice is, after all, an amorphous kind of evidence; it informs us not of what people were doing, but what some people
were telling others they should be doing. Perhaps the best way to categorize advice is as a mild form of social pressure: one can theorize that individuals modify their behaviour only when strong social, economic, or legal pressures indicate that it is expedient to do so. This may have occurred with marriage during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, to speculate on other forms of pressure brought to bear on husbands, wives, and the marital unit is beyond the scope of this paper. To make generalizations about the nature of marriage based solely or even primarily on evidence such as marital advice is presumptuous. All that can be said about these works is that, together, they form a very small piece in a puzzle, a piece which may, when examined within its own context and then taken with many other kinds of evidence, help to illuminate the total picture.
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